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DEAL IN THE MINISTRY.

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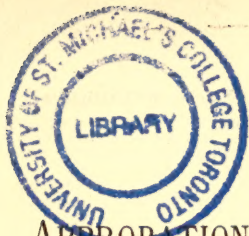


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APPROBATION OF THE FRENCH EDITION,

BY

MONSEIGNEUR JACQUES LOUIS DANIEL,
BISHOP OF COUTANCES.

TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DUBOIS,

CHANOINE HONORAIRE DE COUTANCES.

MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ: I have read the *Pratique du Zèle Ecclésiastique* with the most lively interest. By the publication of this excellent book you have earned the gratitude of religion and of the Clergy. Everything there breathes wisdom and prudence, and not less Christian faith, piety, and love. I know nothing more fitted for the restoration and reanimation of all sacerdotal virtues. You will receive the reward which you had a right to anticipate for your labors. Your book will become the *Manual* of all Priests. Sustained and encouraged by your exhortations and counsels, they will work with more ardor and success for the glory of God and the sanctification of souls.

It is no slight satisfaction to me, to be called upon to examine, at the very commencement of my Episcopate, a book which cannot fail to produce the happiest fruits in the diocese confided to my charge; accept then, Monsieur l'Abbé, my congratulations and thanks, together with the assurance of my affectionate devotion.

JACQUES LOUIS,
Bishop of Coutances.

HOLY REDEEMER LIBRARY, WINDSOR

From the Most Rev. JAMES GIBBONS, D.D., Archbishop of Baltimore:

"I am glad to find that you have published an English translation of the work of the Abbé Dubois on 'ZEAL IN THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.' It is a book well calculated to stimulate the piety of the clergy, and to impress them with renewed ardor in the fulfilment of their arduous labors.

"The excellence of this manual may be inferred from its popularity and diffusion in the original French. I would be delighted to know that every priest exercising the ministry in this diocese would be supplied with a copy."

From the Right Rev. THOMAS L. GRACE, D.D., Bishop of St. Paul:

"I thank you from my heart for having reprinted that most inestimable book for priests, 'ZEAL IN THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.' Nothing will gratify me more than to have this book in the hands of every priest in my diocese."

From the Right Rev. T. MULLEN, D.D., Bishop of Erie:

"'ZEAL IN THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY,' though addressed by its distinguished author, the Abbé Dubois, to the clergy of France, is a book from which the ministers of our holy religion at all times and in all countries may derive much useful and solid instruction not to be found in any other work."

From the Right Rev. S. V. RYAN, D.D., Bishop of Buffalo:

"I am more than pleased that you have brought out the Abbé Dubois' excellent work on 'ZEAL IN THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY,' with which, in the original, I have been long familiar. I will be happy to recommend it to our clergy, to whom the perusal of it cannot fail to be most useful."

From the Right Rev. C. H. BORGESS, D.D., Bishop of Detroit:

"We have taken great pleasure in the perusal of the excellent work, 'ZEAL IN THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY,' by L'Abbé Dubois, and feel confident that, by having published the work, you will not only merit the full approbation, but the sincere gratitude of the clergy."

From the Right Rev. P. T. O'REILLY, D.D., Bishop of Springfield:

"You sent me some time ago a book, which should be in the hands of every Priest in the country. I mean 'ZEAL IN THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.' It is an excellent work, replete with solid instructions, and I thank you for it."

From the Right Rev. R. GILMOUR, D.D., Bishop of Cleveland:

"I have read with much interest and great profit your admirable work on the life and duties of the priest, entitled 'ZEAL IN THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY,' by L'Abbé Dubois. I consider it a golden manual for priests, and as such commend it. The priests of the English-speaking world owe you a deep debt of gratitude for placing it before them in the English language. May it find a place in every priest's library, and be a daily companion in their hours of inner life."

From the Right Rev. JOSEPH DWENGER, D.D., Bishop of Fort Wayne:

"The book of the Abbé Dubois is received. I shall gladly do all I can to circulate it among my clergy."

From the Right Rev. JAMES AUG. HEALY, D.D., Bishop of Portland:

"I thank you heartily not only for a copy of the excellent work of Dubois, but also for your publication of it. It will be commended to the clergy."

From the Right Rev. JAMES O'CONNOR, D.D., Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska.

"You have my sincere thanks for Dubois' 'ZEAL IN THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.' It will give me great pleasure to recommend it to the clergy of the Vicariate."

BENZIGER BROTHERS, NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, & ST. LOUIS.

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

GOD has deigned to bless our humble production far beyond our expectation. From all parts of France we have received great and valuable encouragement, a proof that our work, trifling though it be, has brought forth, and, with God's help, will continue to bring forth, much happy fruit among the Clergy.

The *Zeal in the Work of the Ministry* has been favorably received as a work of considerable utility, and as destined to maintain, and even to kindle more and more, the holy ardor of zeal in the heart of the Priests specially engaged in saving souls. Many venerable Prelates have even expressed their desire that this book might find its way into the hands of every Priest, and become their Manual, and their *Vade Mecum*. Preachers of pastoral retreats have recommended it in an especial manner to the Clergy whom they were addressing; and it has happened that the honored Pontiffs who presided at these holy gatherings have kindly ratified these recommendations by their own words, augmenting their value by the influence and authority of their approbation.

It is therefore an imperative duty that we should pay the just tribute of our gratitude demanded by a concurrence of opinions at once so unanimous and devoted.

We have received from pious and learned ecclesiastics, whose experience we have consulted, certain observations of detail. We have endeavored to turn their advice to advantage in this New Edition.

One of our excellent brethren kindly suggested that a

few pages, devoted to the proof of the necessity of learning and study, as bearing upon zeal for souls, would produce an excellent effect. We have gratefully welcomed this wise reflection, and have added to our work two long and entirely new chapters upon this most important subject of ecclesiastical learning, considered as the instrument and element of zeal.

May these additions and alterations procure more and more the glory of our Divine Master, and the salvation of souls !

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

THE following reflection is one which ought often to occupy our thoughts, and replenish the fountain of our zeal : " A Holy Priest, like Xavier, like Vincent Ferrer, like Dominic, and many others, converts more souls, by his single exertions, than do thousands of ordinary Priests. This holy Priest draws after him enormous populations, in the way of salvation ; and by his holiness, which is his sole, or at least his principal instrument, he renews, as by enchantment, the face of every locality which he traverses ; while generations of Priests succeed each other in their respective dioceses without effecting any improvements worthy of remark."

It is true, and I hasten to acknowledge it, that the complete and sudden renovations produced from time to time on the Church's territory by the holy men of whom I have spoken, are great acts of mercy of which God is not prodigal, and which never manifest themselves in a constant, regular, and universal manner.

Nevertheless, holiness, in the Priest especially, is not, cannot be, unfruitful. A sacred ministry, instituted in the purpose of its Divine Founder, for the salvation of the world, is sure to produce its proper fruit if it be fertilized by the holiness of the Priest who exercises it. In truth, dear and venerable colleagues, the diocese, wherever it may be, to which we belong, should we be able to recognize it in three years only, if all its Priests possessed the holiness of a Vincent de Paul or a Xavier ?

Influenced by these considerations I have composed this work, the publication of which will produce, I hope, much good, if the God of all mercy deign to bless it.

To rekindle in the bosom of the Priesthood the ardor

of that zeal which should be its animating principle ; to call to remembrance those noblest virtues without which it languishes, and with which it works miracles ; further, to bring that zeal into practice, by showing how the Priest ought to act in the various circumstances of daily life, and in his intercourse with the various persons with whom he is perpetually brought into contact ; such, in short, is the plan which I have adopted. God grant that I may have carried it into execution in such a way as to procure abundantly His glory and the salvation of souls !

How much good might be done which is not done ! Is it from want of zeal ? Yes, often ; but often too the good is not done because we never even think of it, or because we set about it badly.

It is generally allowed that a Priest ought to be zealous ; there are plenty of works setting forth the necessity of zeal, its advantages, the various qualities which it should possess ; but the daily, unflagging practice of zeal is not sufficiently acknowledged. A man thinks that he has done marvels when he has undertaken any considerable work for the spiritual good of his parish ; forgetting meanwhile that the most important good is that which the pious pastor is working every hour in the midst of his flock, in asking himself continually, "What can I do at this present moment for the salvation of souls ? What advice can I give to this one ? What gentle reproof can I give to that one ? What sinner can I visit to-day, that I may attempt his conversion ? What virtues ought I especially to bring into play in the company of such and such persons in order to gain souls to Jesus Christ by good example ? What duties can I engage in ? What prayers can I offer, what penance can I impose upon myself, in order to obtain the conversion of my prodigals ?"

Such is zeal in detail, that active zeal, the importance of which I have endeavored to render appreciated by others, and in reference to which I have traced these

rules of conduct in order to facilitate its exercise, and to assure its success.

Any one who may think to find aught but what is purely practical in these pages will be disappointed in his expectation. Theory, or, if you will, the doctrine of zeal, nowhere enters into my plan. Writers enough before me have written upon this theory, and exhausted this doctrine. Thus the clergy are generally convinced so far. But is it equally the case as regards carrying zeal into practice? I think not.

It is on this account that, from the first line to the last, I have never ceased to point to the direct and practical means of saving the greatest possible number of souls. If I commend a virtue; If I attack a fault; if I draw attention to an abuse; if I venture upon a reproach; if I give encouragement or advice, I have always before my eyes my fixed star, my compass: I would say, the title of my book: *Zeal in the Work of the Ministry* (*Pratique du Zèle Ecclésiastique*).

It is probable that this book will receive widely differing receptions from the clerical public to whom it is addressed. Some, I am glad to think, will condescend to honor it with their approbation; but others will doubtless equally claim the right to criticise it on more than one point. It could hardly be otherwise.

If I had confined myself to vague and superficial generalities in speaking of zeal in the ministry, without entering into its wide details, and especially into the practical details which this subject involves, it is manifest that I should have escaped the severity of many critics. But, inasmuch as I have felt it my duty to enter into the inmost recesses of the Priest's life; as I have proposed to myself to accompany him, so to say, in every step that he takes in the parish confided to his care, to remind him continually of what he must do, and what he must avoid if he would labor successfully for the salvation of his brethren; as I touch upon a multitude of

delicate circumstances, for which I lay down rules occasionally hardly in harmony with the susceptibilities of self-esteem ; as, again, more than one reader, placed in one or other of these circumstances, has already his path marked out, his course decided, his principles established, his line of conduct determined, it is needless to state that, if the rules here proposed clash with those which he follows, and is resolved to follow, I must be prepared for criticism on his part.

Not that this criticism will be ill-natured. God forbid that I should cherish such a thought ! No ; he will merely say that I push the exigencies of my moral code to extremes ; that I do not sufficiently put myself in the place of those ecclesiastics whom I am advising ; that it is easy to speak in this strain when writing comfortably in the retirement of my library ; but that, after all, he cannot for his part see things in quite the same light.

Without wishing to weaken the force of whatever truth is contained in the tempered criticisms which I anticipate, I am simply content to say that I have used my utmost endeavors to avoid all exaggeration. I have not pretended that all my recommendations are binding *sub gravi* ; but I have said everywhere, explicitly or implicitly, that in proportion to the Priest's holiness, so would his labors be blessed in the salvation of souls ; that in proportion to his holiness, so the more gloriously for God, the more profitably for himself, will he emerge from a thousand difficulties of detail which daily meet him in the exercise of the holy ministry.

Besides, it is with the torch of experience in my hand that I have spoken in the course of this work throughout. It is after five-and-twenty years spent in the Priesthood that I have composed it ; and it seems that Divine Providence, always marvellous in its ways, has called me to occupy different posts successively, in order to qualify me the better for giving useful advice to all my colleagues.

Let me mention now my several offices; not for my own glory; God forbid! but to give my readers confidence in me, and to afford more weight to the numerous observations which I could not fail to make in the various functions which I have successfully discharged since I became a Priest. Director of a religious community, and of a large school of young girls; Curate of an important parish; Superior of a society of diocesan missionaries; Curé of a parish at once half town, half country; Superior of a *Grand Séminaire*, with the double title of Vicar-general, and Member of the Episcopal Council: such are the different offices which have been confided to me during my life as a Priest, and in which I venture to believe that I have reaped a harvest of practical information, of which this book is at once the memorial and the storehouse.

Perhaps some ecclesiastics, having never exercised the ministry except in populous towns, in Paris for example, will hardly gather that I have here and there given recommendations which are not addressed to them, and which cannot be to them of any great utility. A moment's reflection will suffice to show them that I am writing for the whole world, and that advice which may not apply in one quarter may be most beneficial in another. Moreover, I venture to affirm that I have not censured a single abuse without knowing most positively that that abuse exists. It is always because I have met with and lamented it more than once that I allow myself to draw attention to it.

I do not suppose that the laity will be tempted to read a book which in no way applies to them. Yet if any should care to peruse it, and should feel surprise at the rules of conduct there laid down for the clergy, and at the reproaches addressed to those who transgress these rules, I beg them most earnestly not to make this the ground for passing an unfavorable judgment upon the whole body of the clergy, which, as is allowed by the

irreligious themselves, has never offered such an example of edification as at the present day. If my advice and my reproaches apply to *some* of my colleagues, I am thankful to be able to add that *by far the greater number* neither need my advice, nor deserve my censure. In venturing to lay down rules of conduct, and to criticise certain faults, I have but one object in view, to enhance even more, were it possible, the glory of our honorable corporation, and to aid all its members in acquiring virtues pure from all alloy.

If, with God's help, a sixth edition of this work were demanded, I should most gladly join to my own reflections those which any of my brethren may suggest to me. I shall therefore thankfully receive any observations which may be addressed to me, and willingly modify my original thoughts, if others should be suggested to me more conducive to the glory of God, and the salvation of souls.

I think that this book may be useful to all Priests generally ; but it is to those engaged in the ordinary duties of the ministry that I most especially recommend it. I desire also, and most earnestly, that the students in the *Grands Séminaires* who are already in holy orders, should read it, and read it again, with the utmost attention. My reason for particular earnestness in the expression of this last wish, is that men of high standing, eminent for their learning and virtue, have told me how much it was to be desired that the *Pratique du Zèle* should find an abundant circulation in the *Séminaires*.

If, in contributing by my labors to the salvation of souls, God should be, however little, glorified, the praise be to Him, the God of Love, for ever and ever ! And if, by this same labor, I have been useful to any beloved brother, I would ask the expression of his gratitude in intercession for me with the August Victim Whom he daily offers upon the Holy Altar.

ZEAL

IN

THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.

PART FIRST.

PRACTICE OF ZEAL IN SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE—
THE VIRTUES SPECIALLY NECESSARY TO RENDER
ZEAL EFFICACIOUS.

I. THE first requisite, the *sine qua non* of all success in the exercise of zeal, is unquestionably good example. You may thunder from the pulpit, you may exhort in the confessional, you may ascend the steps of the altar with a show of fervor; but if your life be not holy, if your conduct, your works, contradict your public teaching, your private exhortations, and your seeming devotion,—your zeal will be but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. We must, therefore, take for granted, that our zeal must have as its foundation and root a holy life, really edifying, and truly worthy of a priest.

Of course, such a holiness implies necessarily the possession and practice of all virtues without any exception; if, therefore, in the first part of this work we pass over some, and mention others only, of these virtues, it would be a mistake to imagine that we undervalue those which we do not specially recommend.

As, then, in our plan it is zeal in relation to which everything is viewed, we have thought it right to confine ourselves to showing the necessity of those virtues, which being, so to say, more external and salient than others, strike men more forcibly, give especial edification, impress them with a high idea of the holiness of those who practise them, and, by a necessary consequence, act powerfully in rendering zeal efficacious.

CHAPTER I.

OF ZEAL: ITS NECESSITY DEMONSTRATED BY POWERFUL MOTIVES.

2. I AM a priest, and as a priest it is certain that I am bound to imitate, in an especial manner, Jesus Christ.

Am I not in His stead upon earth, His minister, His chosen disciple? Is it not His own ministry that I am continuing? In my most solemn functions, in the confessional, and at the altar, am I not another Jesus Christ, as I have heard so many times: *Sacerdos alter Christus*? Am I not, then, bound to tread in His steps? Is it not incumbent upon me to regulate my conduct after His conduct; to conform my will to His will, my thoughts to His thoughts, and my works to His works? Now what has this Divine Saviour done for the salvation of souls? By the most wonderful humiliation which has ever been, or which can ever be, He was made man in the bosom of one of His creatures. Yes, He truly took a human heart, and in this heart He has placed a furnace of love, which He kept ever constantly burning during His life on earth, which He cherishes still unextinguished in the heaven of heavens, and which He wills to be kept alive even unto the end of the world, by those who are sent to continue His work.

“The love which was burning in that Divine heart,” says Cardinal de la Luzerne, “was a love full of tenderness, which made Him run with eagerness after one lost sheep; a paternal love which welcomed His poor prodigal with a burst of joy that baffles all description; an unwearied love which disregarded fatigue, hunger, thirst, and all other wants, to teach and save one sinful woman of Samaria; a generous love which shed tears over the fate of ungrateful Jerusalem, the terrible fall of which His prophetic mind was already discerning; even more, it was an inexhaustible love, which, from its desire to manifest itself, longed for that baptism of blood where-with His whole body was to be baptized on the cross.”

Such was the zeal of Jesus Christ! Such the admirable examples that He proposed to His priests: *Exemplum dedi vobis!*

3. Under pain of damnation, we are bound to love God. “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ,” cried St. Paul, “let him be anathema.”

How happy should we be if we could acquire a thorough conviction that we love God sincerely! What blessedness above all if we could certainly know that we love Him with that ardent and exalted love which in a moment changes the most guilty sinner into a most perfect saint.

The following rule is very useful towards forming some estimate of our love, viz. that every one should ask himself, Am I animated by true zeal for the salvation of souls? Is my heart longing for the conversion of sinners? Do I shed tears over their deep errors? When in fervent prayer I hold in my hand the cross of Jesus, when I press it tenderly to my heart, when I apply it lovingly to my lips, does the thought of so many unhappy sinners, whose salvation is confided to my charge, and who daily crucify my Lord afresh, produce a lively impression in my heart of hearts? Are all my thoughts, my words, my deeds, my prayers, my labors,

my sufferings—is everything, in short, directed towards obtaining for these erring children the tender kiss of reconciliation, which our loving Father in heaven has commanded me to offer to them?

If such be the state of my mind, I may undoubtedly entertain the most positive assurance that divine love dwells in my heart of hearts.

Our zeal is in exact proportion to our love for God; if I have no zeal, I have no love, I am dead; if I have but little zeal, I have but little love, I am lukewarm; if I have much zeal, I have much love; then I am fervent. If I am wholly pervaded and consumed by the flames of zeal, then it is an undoubted sign that my soul is penetrated by all the fires of divine love; then I am a saint, an apostle, a true priest.

To love souls, and not to love God, is impossible. How shall I love the images, and not the Divine original? Can I love the souls crimsoned with the blood of Jesus, and not love Jesus himself? Shall I love sinners even so as to sacrifice everything, in order to bring them into heaven, and shall I not cherish in my heart that divine love without which I must be thrown into hell for all eternity? It is impossible.

A zealous Religious of the Society of Jesus, who had spent his life in laboring for the conversion of sinners, when on the point of death, was yet so joyous and confident in his salvation, that some of the fathers, deeming his confidence excessive, admonished him, that at his last hour he was right, no doubt, to trust in the mercy of God; but that at the same time he ought to fear His justice. "What!" replied he, "have I, then, been serving Mahomet? I have been serving a faithful and recompensing God: what have I to fear?"

4. I am a Priest; that is to say, I am by my vocation a saviour of souls.

It is the office of the physician to minister to the bodily ailments of the sick; of the lawyer, to protect

the interests of his clients ; of the judge, to decide with impartiality ; but the priest's office is to save souls.

Assuredly I am not a priest that I may take the first place in the house of God ; I am not a priest that I may occupy a parsonage in idleness ; I am not a priest in order to store, day by day, my money in a strong-box, to be one day squandered by heirs who will not thank me for my sordid parsimony ; I am not a priest in order to take part in all the festivities of the neighborhood, and finish up by playing cards till midnight ; I am not a priest that I may aim at preferments, or covet dignities, from which faith shrinks, and of which I am unworthy from the very fact that I covet them. Further, let me say more, I am not a priest in order to wear the clerical dress, which distinguishes me from a layman ; I am not a priest in order to bear about a sacred and indelible character impressed upon my soul ; I am not a priest merely to say the divine office and offer the Holy Sacrifice ; but I am a priest that I may procure the greater glory of God, by laboring zealously for the salvation of souls—of my own soul first, and then of those of my brethren.

Such then, as a priest, is my true aim ; my chief, my ultimate end. Woe to me if I propose to myself an opposite aim ! .

That I may not be diverted from that end, I must avoid the faults just mentioned—idleness, avarice, ambition, love of play and of good cheer ; it is with this end in view that I must say my office, offer the Holy Sacrifice, administer the sacraments, and make the sacred character which ennobles my soul respected by solid virtues and all good works. In this way I am really and by vocation a saviour of souls ; this is no hyperbolical expression, for it is the true word, the word, perhaps, which best conveys the impression I ought to have of the nature of my profession.

5. Thousands of sinners cover the face of the earth.

They surround us on every side. A very great number die in a state of mortal sin. Every day a multitude of souls are plunged in the depth of hell, and there they will remain forever, loaded with the eternal malediction of God.

Is this true? True; and nothing but what I preach to men. Yes, it is true; on this point I have not the least doubt. But if it be true that before my eyes every day a multitude of men incur damnation, and if, again, I am by my calling a saviour of souls, how shall I characterize my coldness, my indifference, and my insensibility? No! with these thoughts before me, self-deception becomes impossible. Do we not know that all around us in our parishes there are lost sheep, and do we not know well, or, at least, may we not reasonably presume, that many of those unfortunates only wait for a single word from the shepherd to return?

And that word, which would cost us so little, we do not utter. That advice which, given in good time, might be productive of such happy results, we do not give. And those prayers, those good works, those penances, that we might offer to God, to obtain from His mercy the return of these prodigal children, are matters to which we scarcely give a thought! Forgive us our blindness, O Lord, and kindle our zeal.

6. A multitude of souls will be lost forever by the fault of an indolent and unzealous priest; while had their pastor been full of fervor and zeal, many would have been saved.

This is a reflection as true as it is overwhelming to the priest without zeal. A few words will be sufficient to place it in all its clearness before our minds.

Let us suppose there are two parishes whose spiritual needs are very great, and which are in the sight of God in a most grievous condition. In each of them there are the same number of sinners, hardened in the same degree. Of these parishes each receives at the same

time a pastor, the one pious, fervent, animated by a holy zeal ; the other, not what is commonly called a bad priest, but an easy and indolent one, indifferent to the present and future condition of sinners ; in short, a priest without zeal, who sleeps on quietly, because he performs what he thinks most essential, viz. the official part of his ministry. Let us follow them in their work. In the parish which possesses the fervent and zealous pastor, what activity there is ! what a revival ! How many a Lazarus is raised from the dead ! how many prodigal sons return to the arms of their loving Father ! how the fervor of the pastor has won back his flock ! and, as a necessary consequence, how many souls have been saved !

How great a torpor, on the contrary, in the other parish ! What icy coldness ! What holding back from the confessional, and even from church ! What daily deepening ignorance ! What a hardening of the soul ! What terrible insensibility, just where sin is greatest ! How many appalling deaths ! and, as a necessary consequence, how many lost souls !

Whence arises this enormous difference between two parishes a short time since alike ? Is it not clear ? The pastor of the one has zeal, that of the other has none.

7. Oh ! that to save souls, and to bring them to Jesus Christ, we did, if not so much as, yet the half of what is done by worldly men to win honors, to acquire riches, and procure vain pleasures !

Shame to see the children of this world show greater ardor in pursuit of worldly vanities than we in obtaining for our brethren the imperishable blessings of the life to come !

They run after honors which fly from them, like butterflies before children, and which lose their vain fascinations as soon as caught. They heap up treasures which they do not enjoy in this world, and that cannot follow them into the next. They indulge their senses and their

bodies in pleasures of all kinds, and when they least think of it, death strikes them, and lays them in the churchyard, where, under a few feet of earth, they moulder away, and soon lose even the name of a corpse !

And yet, to obtain these honors, these riches, and these pleasures, what cares, what trouble, and what anxieties ! what sacrifices ! what labor ! what distresses ! nay, what tears !

What then ! Shall we see these fools run panting after vain illusions, and shall we refuse to run after the souls of which we are the pastors, which flee before us, guilty of the precious blood of Jesus Christ ? Immortal souls that will, to-morrow perhaps, be plunged into hell, unless we, by the activity of our zeal, open to them, to-day, the gates of heaven. Jesus ! merciful Jesus ! suffer it not to be so.

8. Again, if we are not zealous priests, what will be our ordinary occupation ? If works of zeal do not occupy our days, how shall we employ the time devoted by holy priests to such works ? In useless readings ? So much lost time. In interminable visits that are not justified by any useful end ? Lost time again, and often scandal as well. In frequent excursions without any object ? Lost time, dissipation, enervation, useless expense, are the results. In cards and festivities ? Lost time again, scandal, prodigality, the spirit of piety evaporated, proximate occasion of many sins. How many souls we might have saved during that time, if we would !

9. We are anxious for the good opinion of our people. Independently of its necessity for the success of our ministry, we love to think that we have an honorable place in the esteem and affection of our flock. Blind that we are, not to perceive that a devoted zeal is the only true means to obtain our end.

We do not know precisely what is thought and what

is said about us ; we are not aware of the reproaches which are uttered against us. People are too polite, or, rather, are not candid enough, to tell us of our failings. Since, then, we are left to our own reflections, let us reflect a little.

Who are those among our brethren whose praises we hear most of? And who are those, on the contrary, whose conduct procures them more or less censure?

What a light these two questions throw on the whole matter! We must confess that esteem, respect, admiration, affection, praises, are the lot of our fervent and zealous brethren. All their works are extolled, all their undertakings approved, all their ministry blessed.

On the other hand, indifference, coldness, disgust, sharp criticism, bitter censure, reproaches, and even slanders, fall to the lot of those whose want of zeal is only too perceptible. The world, and even the most corrupted part of the world, esteems every man who does his duty, in whatever station in life he may be placed. "He is full of the spirit of his office." These words have been, and will be always, words of praise, and this praise belongs, in all its fulness, to the zealous priest, because zeal is the essential obligation which his calling imposes upon him.

10. Fervent and zealous priests edify us and make us desire to resemble them ; whence it follows that, were we ourselves fervent and zealous, it is most probable, or even morally certain, that we should contribute by our example to stir up the zeal of some cold and indifferent fellow-worker.

And should we not change his disposition, we should be able, at least, to prevail upon him to undertake certain outward works which he never would have executed if we had not taken the initiative.

When a parish possesses a zealous priest for its pastor, the great good that he effects by his ministry is spoken of throughout the neighborhood, the works of his zeal

are published everywhere ; crowds hasten to be enrolled on the register of the confraternity established by his care ; everybody is anxious to assist in the instructions of a *novena*, or of a retreat which he gives from time to time, for the conversion of sinners, and for the strengthening of the righteous. The coldest priest, when he hears the praise bestowed upon so fruitful a ministry, will necessarily desire to meet the same approbation ; he will dread a comparison which will be wholly to his own discredit ; and yet further, should his inward disposition remain unchanged, his external conduct will no longer be the same.

How many good works owe their existence solely to such motives ! How many *Via crucis* erected ! How many congregations organized ! How many instructions given ! How many pious practices established, which would never have existed had not the torpid charity of such and such pastors been awakened, excited, urged on by the edifying zeal of some fellow-priest !

II. There is another benefit infinitely precious which zeal must of necessity confer upon us. It will preserve us from the appalling dangers by which we are closely surrounded in society, and which have so often made us tremble, especially when they were strikingly and truthfully pointed out in the instructions of the retreats, as we were under preparation for the priesthood.

And, indeed, what danger can be incurred by one who is always ready to engage in works of zeal ? In such a state, if one be only animated by a pure intention, what cause is there for fear from the enemies of our salvation ? My mind constantly occupies itself in devising new means for converting sinners. My heart sighs only after their conversion ; my strength is exerted only in seeking them. My imagination feeds only on the happiness of seeing them ere long penitent and happy at my feet. My toils, my journeys, my penances, my prayers are all for them. What do I say ? For them ? In a word, all

is for God, to Whom I reconcile them, and to Whose glory all redounds with such marvellous profusion.

Courage, my soul ; God fights for him who fights for God, and thine own salvation is most sure when thou busiest thyself most actively in saving sinners.

12. We have just spoken of the joy of the priest who sees a sinner at his feet penitent and happy. Should a happiness, so pure and so delightful, be the only recompense granted by God to a zealous priest, such a remuneration should be deemed enough to fulfil his dearest expectations, and to repay all his care and weariness.

Where is the priest whose heart has not felt the deepest consolation in hearing the sighs of one, who, after a long course of sin, is now sincerely penitent? What on earth can afford the holy priest a joy more truly divine, and known only to those who already feel it (*Datum est nosse, cui datum est experiri*), than those tears, that expression of his regrets, that touching confession of his faults? And just as a mother cherishes most deeply those among her children who were the more difficult to rear, so those wandering sheep who have so often wearied the zeal of the good pastor, are precisely those whose return brings to his soul the sweetest and most abundant consolation.

Oh, what delights there are, even on this earth, for a zealous priest ! And, on the contrary, how deplorable in every point of view is the condition of the priest without zeal !

13. Now, if the consolations which reward the zealous priest, even in this sorrowful world, are already so sweet, what will they not be in heaven ! There, what a crown of glory will be formed around the worthy pastor by the multitude of souls, who will, under God, owe their eternal happiness to him !

Here, reality altogether baffles the powers of speech ; the marvels of which we speak are infinitely above our

thoughts and our words. They are beyond our experience, and too far above the most seductive pictures of our imagination, for us to attempt more than to repeat, with the prophet, these words, so full of comfort and so calculated to arouse our zeal: "Lord, when Thy glory, that glory in which Thou vouchsafest to associate me with Thyself, shall be revealed to me, the measure of my happiness will be full, all my desires will be answered, I shall be satiated with bliss." *Satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua.*

14. Let us now see what have been the thoughts of the saints on this subject of our meditations.

First, St. Paul utters these astounding words: *Optabam enim ego anathema esse a Christo pro fratribus meis*—words so astounding, that commentators lessen their natural meaning, saying that the holy apostle desired to be accursed temporally, not eternally.

St. John Chrysostom used to say that, if to save the souls entrusted to him he needed but to lose both eyes, he would make that sacrifice with unbounded joy. *Millies optarem ipse cæcus, si per hoc liceret animas convertere.* (S. Chrys. Hom. 3, in Act. Ap.) St. Bonaventure protests that he would willingly submit to death as many times as there were sinners on earth, if it would secure the salvation of all of them. (Stim. Div. Amor, p. 2, c. 11.)

St. Gaetan happened to be at Naples during the revolution in 1647. He felt so sad and so grieved at the sight of the many souls lost for such a cause, that he died heart-broken.

St. Ignatius de Loyola said that if, by dying on the spot, the salvation of his soul would be secured, he would gladly risk his salvation by remaining longer on earth in order to win souls to Christ; whereupon somebody replying to him that it was not wise to risk the salvation of his soul to save those of his fellow-men, he answered with that firmness of zeal and confidence which

springs from a strong faith, "Is God then a tyrant, Who, seeing that I risk my salvation that I may win souls to Him, would thereupon plunge me into hell?"

St. Charles Borromeo said that a priest who desires to live at his ease, and enjoy all the comforts of life, and to do everything which may be good for the health of his body, will never fulfil the duties of his office.

St. Theresa, when she read the lives of the holy martyrs and preachers of the gospel, used to say that she rather envied the condition of the evangelists than of the martyrs, because of the glory that they procure to God who employ themselves in converting sinners.

St. Catherine of Sienna used to kiss respectfully the footprints of the priests who were engaged in the work of saving souls. That saint had so excessive a desire for the salvation of sinners, that in one of her holy raptures she said, "I would willingly lay myself at the mouth of hell, to prevent the souls from being cast therein."

St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi is much to be admired in this particular. "Would I were a bird," said she, "to fly everywhere. Oh! had I wings like the birds, could I leave my convent without injury to my profession, I would fly this very day to the Indies; there gathering round me the children of those poor heathen, I would teach them the truths of our holy religion, so as to win their souls to Jesus."

One day, having heard the account of the travels of St. Francis Xavier, she turned and said to the novices: "My children, let us ask of God the conversion of one heathen, and let us offer for that end all the good that we can do this day, or rather let us pray to Him to convert as many poor souls as we shall make steps during the day, or stitches with our needles, or words in reciting the divine office."

She said another time, "Should our Lord ask me as He did St. Thomas Aquinas, what gift I would have from

His bounty, I should answer, The salvation of souls." One day some one found her sad, and in tears ; and having asked her the cause of such grief : "Alas," said she, sighing, "it is that I pass my life uselessly, doing nothing for the service of God, and the salvation of souls." And yet she was almost incessantly praying for the conversion of sinners ; and for the most hardened she imposed on herself most frightful penances, such as being clad in haircloth, scourging herself with an iron chain, self-torture till the blood flowed, or burning her flesh with melted wax. One day, taking in her hand a crucifix, she exclaimed in a voice of zeal and fervor : "O my Jesus, Thou didst well to be crucified for sinners, and to give for them all the Blood that flowed in Thy veins ; and would that I could follow Thy example, and shed my blood and give my life for their conversion." "What a shame," said a holy man, one day, in our presence, addressing some ecclesiastics, "if at the last day it is found that the most perfect act of zeal and love has been not the act of a priest, but of a layman, perhaps of a poor girl." *

15. Such are the principal motives of zeal with which he must be deeply imbued who wishes to read with advantage, and faithfully to put into practice, the following rules of conduct. Each of these motives might be taken as a subject either for the morning devotion, or for the evening visit to the Blessed Sacrament. It will be very useful to read this chapter again frequently, especially if any one should perceive that the fervor of his zeal seems to be cooling down.

* P. Gloriot, of the Society of Jesus.

CHAPTER II.

ARRIVAL IN A PARISH.—THE CONDUCT OF THE PRIEST DURING THE FIRST FEW DAYS AFTER HIS ARRIVAL.—WHAT VIRTUES SHOULD BE IMMEDIATELY PUT FORWARD.

16. WE shall not treat of any particular virtue in this chapter. The priest must in the beginning of his ministry set an example, not of any one particular virtue, but of all virtues combined. On making his first appearance in the parish where he is to exercise his zeal, he cannot be too guarded in his behavior. We do not always know to what extent we attract the attention of those whom we meet ; every one is anxious to see the new pastor as soon as possible, and anxious not only to see him, but to form an opinion of him ; and this first opinion is the important point. Man is so constituted that he forms his judgment at first sight. Few persons can look at a thing without giving an immediate verdict of some kind or other.

On what ground then shall our beginner be judged ? His virtues and his defects are yet unseen ; his habits, his tastes, his character, that is to say, all things which cannot be perceived at first sight—are unknown to the multitude. They will form their opinion solely from outward appearances. True, the outward man alone stands before the public view, but at the same time the whole outward man is there. Everybody will observe, and with the greatest eagerness, the expression, the bearing, the manners, the looks, the dress, the countenance, gloomy or cheerful, gentle or stern, of the new priest ; his first words especially will make a great impression ; it will be noticed whether they are grave, discreet, and pious, or, on the contrary, trifling, rallying,

and unedifying. After that, each withdraws, carrying with him in his mind the result of the whole impression, and before the sun sets all have passed sentence on the new-comer.

We do not say that this first sentence is without an appeal ; before declaring their judgment irrevocably, grave and prudent men will see the new priest at work ; but, among the mass, wise men always form the minority. All, or nearly all, have formed their judgment ; all will try to prove that they have formed a correct judgment ; and we must confess that often in such cases this judgment will be maintained, because, in truth, the first glance will be justified. These various reflections lead us to the conclusion, that every priest coming into a parish to exercise the holy ministry must be more watchful over himself than even his parishioners are, who are scrutinizing his conduct. Let us now enter fully into the details of the subject, and lay down those rules of conduct which, in such circumstances, are suggested by a thoughtful zeal.

17. First, he must be firmly resolved to establish in the parish the reputation of a pious priest, full of fervor and zeal ; and he must say to himself decidedly : “ Such is the opinion that everybody shall have of me from the first ; yes, all my parishioners shall be convinced at once, by looking at me, that I am animated by the spirit of Jesus Christ ; that I am living His life, and that my pious and modest exterior is the effluence of the holy fervor which burns in my soul.”

When a priest has resolutely laid down his course of life in this manner, and frequently recalls this determination to his mind, a moderate degree of tact and judgment will suffice to show in each circumstance, and even in the most minute details, what ought to be done, and what ought to be avoided ; if, on the contrary, a priest has not given his particular attention to this fundamental point, he is less on his guard ; he will allow himself some

habits, some liberties, or utter some incautious expressions, from which will result those painful prejudices of which we have spoken above.

18. A priest would be guilty of great indiscretion should he make his first appearance in the parish in the manner which is called in legal phrase "an inspection."

For instance, a priest is called by his Bishop to another cure of souls; he is not much attached to that which he occupies at present; still he would not like to leave, unless that which is offered him holds out greater attractions. What shall he do? To answer immediately that he accepts the proposal is that which the voice of God whispers to him, and which a holy priest would certainly do; but the voice of nature is not that of grace; and, unfortunately, the voice of nature is the voice to which men listen; so the answer to the Bishop is deferred for some days, and during that time much information is gathered from different quarters, perhaps even a secret visit paid to the parish. Parsonage, garden, church, sacristy, ornaments, all are inspected, under a quasi-incognito. The answer is no longer deferred, but what is the result?

If he accepts the offer, and becomes the priest of the new parish, the parishioners discover very soon that the new pastor has made a previous inspection of the locality, and that the salvation of their souls was not of so much importance in his eyes as the greater amount of temporal convenience that his new sphere offered.

Should he refuse, and remain at his former post, his parishioners will soon know that a new charge has been offered to him, that he has made very careful inquiries respecting it, and that if he remains among them, it is because he does not find a better position elsewhere. Many a priest has had to deplore such want of caution.

19. A priest's dress should be neat, but simple; but neatness must not become elegance, nor simplicity de-

generate into slovenliness ; nothing on any account should betray worldliness.

In like manner (we must be excused these details) the priest should not wear too rich a cassock, especially if he lives in the country ; there must be no rings on his fingers ; no affectation in wearing the hair, which might give rise to the idea that there is a desire to emulate the elegants of the day ; nothing, in a word, which might indicate that the mind is taken up with the toilet ; that too much care is given to attire, that there is a desire to attract particular attention in these matters, and that the priest shapes his conduct according to the frivolous fashions of the world, instead of conforming himself to that simplicity which becomes a good priest. We must add that a priest ought to wear, and be resolved to wear, always his full ecclesiastical dress.

To those who, perchance, may feel disposed to criticise the preceding details we will propose two questions. Why have all holy priests followed exactly the conduct here recommended ? Why are we in these respects in perfect agreement with all the preachers of pastoral retreats ?

20. Many priests are not cautious enough about their deportment, their posture, their bearing, their manner of walking, and the external indications of the character in general. Some priests are grave, even to affectation ; others so easy and careless as to preclude all feeling of respect for them.

The deportment ought to be natural and without affectation, but grave, modest, and piously composed ; as for the gait, it should be natural but dignified, and rather slow than rapid ; all those frequent and sudden movements of the head, arms, and legs, which are almost always proofs of levity, of a want of self-discipline, and, in general, of the absence of piety, should be avoided. Be careful in these matters ; they may, perhaps, appear trifling in the sight of some ; nevertheless, he alone who

carefully observes them will give his parishioners reason to say, when they see him for the first time : Our new pastor is a holy priest.

21. We must speak in a special section of a very important point, the modesty of the looks. We said before, that all eyes are directed to the priest on his first arrival in the parish, especially if he comes to take charge of it. If he is examining all around him, his looks will meet those of many inquisitive persons, who watch him, and who will say that he is himself inquisitive, light, without much modesty, and bold ; and the malicious will even say that he has impudence in his look, and will soon give him a reputation for levity, which will injure the fruits of his ministry from its first commencement.

A priest, then, should never look about him with an inquisitive and wandering air, nor fix his eyes upon the persons whom he meets, especially upon those of the opposite sex. Must he then keep his eyes upon the ground, so that they appear almost closed ? No ; that would be affected. The wisest rule that has been proposed in this respect, is to direct the eyes downwards to a point four or five paces in advance. Should the priest think proper from time to time to raise them, he must try to give them that expression of sweetness, candor, and modesty, so pleasing to every one, because it reflects the serenity of a well-regulated mind.

22. Let us next speak of the first visits, the formal visits paid in the parish ; visits that are not only obligatory, but which must not be postponed beyond a certain time. It is here that the conduct of a priest assumes a greater importance, and requires a more attentive and careful vigilance ; and so much the more, indeed, because here judgment will certainly be passed upon him. Every word of the new pastor will be treasured up, weighed, interpreted, reported to friends and neighbors, not without comments and constructions, into which severe criticism will largely enter.

Would you disarm this criticism? Then be kind, open, amiable, natural, and without a shade of affectation; speak but little, and slowly; do not interrupt those you converse with; show that you are interested in what they say, and, when an occasion offers, throw a few edifying words into the conversation. For instance, a word in praise of the Curé, should you be his new curate, or of your predecessor, should you be the newly appointed Curé, will generally be well received. A few expressions of kindly feeling, and of satisfaction at being called to exercise your ministry in the parish, will produce a favorable effect.

23. We may notice some faults to be particularly avoided when the priest is thus visiting his new parishioners for the first time.

On entering each house he should say to himself, in the spirit of faith, "I will sow some good seed here." Animated by this pious thought, the priest would, at any rate, see clearly what errors to guard against.

For instance, he would avoid that loose way of talking, which, always unbecoming, is, under such circumstances, most reprehensible. In like manner, he will avoid those bursts of laughter which betray imperfect education, as well as thorough frivolity. So, too, if Christian politeness condemns exaggerated gestures and a too great freedom of manner, much more does the decorum incumbent upon the priest condemn them; besides, a limit must be set to that excessive merriment which turns everything into jesting, and confers the character at once of a good fellow and a jolly priest. While that cold and crabbed look must be equally avoided, which would cause many a sinner to say, "Well, it is not to him that I shall make my confession."

24. Now to the church. The office assembles a numerous flock who are waiting for us there impatiently. Here a new tribunal is erected. If the priest enters with a careless air, if he neglects to take holy water,

and even to look where the benitier is situated ; if he walks hurriedly and without dignity ; if he adores the Blessed Sacrament without showing any marked devotion ; if he, during that short act of adoration, looks right and left at the pictures, the statues, the side altars, or the architecture of the church, then he is already judged. Probably no one will say, "He is a bad priest ;" but no one will say, "He is a saint ;" and it is these last words which he must force from the lips of the parishioners, if he is anxious to establish the first condition of a fruitful ministry.

And let no one say, there is no sin in doing this or that ; that is not the question. Are you anxious, or not, to acquire at first the character of a holy priest ? If such be your aim, if you are sincerely animated by the spirit of piety, let your face reflect the very image of your soul, and show yourself at once a holy priest.

But what will your congregation think, if, before saying your first mass, you should kneel merely for a few seconds without any outward collectedness or appearance of piety ? What must they imagine if you should say that mass with extreme haste, without seriousness or modesty, and that depth of feeling which, in the saints, touched their people more than the most eloquent sermons ? What must be the effect if, instead of making your thanksgiving, you should stay in the sacristy talking, and, perhaps, laughing, so as to distress and scandalize the pious faithful, who often remain to offer their private prayers before the holy altar.

O how important is attentive self-watchfulness, when performing in a parish the first functions of the sacred ministry !

Some priests seem to have a desire of showing the superiority of their voice ; probably such is not their intention ; but they swell or soften its tones with an affectation which is noticed by every one ; forgetting that if every one ought to chant to the best of his

ability, he ought equally to avoid every semblance of vanity.

Some priests perform with the utmost haste, and with an unpardonable negligence, those offices of the ministry which make no show, while they introduce excessive pomp and magnificence into those which are witnessed by the whole congregation. Why do they not see that these defects, brought to light at the first moment of their arrival, alienate the confidence of their parishioners, which might have been elicited by that amiable modesty, that pious candor, and that heavenly demeanor which are perfectly irresistible?

As we are still in the church, let us say one word about the first sermon. Every one will agree that this sermon ought to be affectionate, benevolent, and paternal, displaying a zeal active and full of kindness. Such should be the groundwork; as for the details, it is clear that they will vary according to the circumstances of time, place, and congregation.

25. Amongst the works of zeal to be undertaken by the priest on his first arrival in a new parish, the reformation of abuses will occupy a prominent position. When a man leaves a well-regulated parish to pass to another which is in disorder, he often feels so painfully affected, as to prepare at once for a work of extermination. But he must be careful, very careful; the rock is not far from his little bark; and how many pilots have paid dearly for an imprudent and rash manœuvre!

When a priest is struck by numerous abuses, the great thing is not to destroy them at once, but to take good note of them, in order to attack them later *in tempore opportuno*: we say, take note of them, because we may soon become accustomed to them as our predecessor was, and leave them to others, as they were left to us. They must not be lost sight of; but before declaring open war, it is wiser to study the parish and its spirit, and to speak of the abuses which require to be remedied first, to those

persons who have the greatest influence with the majority of the parishioners. We must see if they cling to that which shocks us, and whether in attacking a particular abuse we may not raise a violent storm against ourselves ; because, if such promises to be the result of our endeavors, it would be better, speaking generally, to defer our projects of reform.

Should the abuse be so crying that we cannot possibly tolerate it, we ought not to engage in the work before consulting our superiors ; and then it would not be enough solely to set forth the disorders engendered by the abuses which we desire to reform ; but we ought also to draw attention to the inconveniences, of greater or less degree, which must be the consequence of attacking them.

Suppose the case in which it would be better not to attack an abuse directly, must we be disheartened, and abandon our projects of reform altogether ? Assuredly no. Then what is to be done ? We must by degrees prepare the minds of the people, and quietly bring them over to our point of view with tact and discretion. We must take advantage of all opportunities to show the inconvenience of the evil, and the advantage of its removal. If the first hint is favorably received, another step will follow in the same direction, and in this manner we often end in gaining our object without trouble or violence.

But, after all, in every circumstance of this kind, the great secret of success is to gain, in a high degree, the esteem and affection of the flock. We should always begin by this ; it is a sort of passport granted by the parish, by the help of which we make many little excursions of zeal, not only without danger, but even with great spiritual advantage, on an unfavorable ground, where a haughty and too impetuous pastor could not venture.

26. When our projects of reform consist in suppressing any pious practices which have been held in the

church for many years, we must deliberate long before we make this suppression. Such pious practices often have in their favor an origin which is revered, and deservedly so, by the population; that origin ought to be well investigated, and care taken not to excite the anger of those who make a special profession of devotion.

Without doubt, it is not wise lightly to establish any new customs which tie the hands of future Curés forever; but when we find them once established, it is always an odious task to destroy them. They will often have been established by some venerable pastor, whose whole life has been simple, and whose memory is still blessed in the parish. The congregation would consider that holy pastor as insulted, seeing a young Curé pulling down that which the former had raised with so much piety and zeal.

The people, without doubt, do not always see things in their true light; but we must take into consideration the weakness of their judgment, and not wage war against their opinions, even when erroneous, since they cling to them quite as much as if they were true. The people, moreover, with its rough common-sense, will never be able to understand that piety can destroy the works of piety. Many pastors have had to repent of enforcing such reforms.

27. If the rules of conduct which we have suggested be followed closely, in private as well as in public, it is certain that the most happy impressions will be produced in every mind; and if works of zeal every day fortify this first impression, we may be sure that a ministry exercised with so much devotion, wisdom, and piety, will be rewarded with abundant fruits of salvation.

We must, nevertheless, warn the priest to be upon his guard against those sudden outbreaks of zeal which may be called freaks of enthusiasm. Ardent and hasty temperaments undertake with eagerness, but soon abandon their enterprises. Such men, on arriving in the parish,

will have their heads full of twenty schemes at a time, but instead of carrying them out regularly one after the other, they put them in hand all at once, and end by failure in all.

Let us begin with what we believe we can finish well, and never undertake what we are almost certain we shall never manage to accomplish. Better to promise little to a parish, and give much, than to make brilliant promises, and give little. If our zeal makes every day new developments, we gain every day more and more right to public esteem; this esteem without doubt will increase in the same proportion as our zeal; but if, after announcing miracles, we execute nothing but a few petty prodigies, we shall be ridiculed in proportion to the magnificence with which our miracles were announced.

CHAPTER III.

GENTLENESS.

28. GENTLENESS of disposition has, indeed, every title to be called the key of hearts; generally speaking, nothing can resist this virtue. The most zealous and energetic preachers in the time of St. Francis de Sales, converted a far less number of sinners by the holy bursts of their zeal, than that good and holy bishop by the charm of his gentleness.

But this virtue is most especially that of the priest, not only because he insists upon this virtue every day in his instructions; not only because he owes to his flock the edification and continual example of all the virtues; not only because it was the virtue dearest to Christ and to His saints; but because without gentleness the priest will, in many instances, find his ministry paralyzed.

In certain professions, let us observe it well, a man might, perhaps, dispense with this virtue, without compromising in any great degree the success of his office; for instance, when he is in a position to obtain by authority what he cannot obtain by kindness and gentleness. Such are, in general, all places where the occupant is empowered by government, and supported by the authority of the law. But there are other cases in which man depends so much on the public, that should he not gain their esteem, confidence, and affection, by kindness, gentleness, affability, and consideration, he is left so completely isolated, that all the means employed to assure the success of his ministry are rendered powerless.

This latter is clearly the position of the priest. His zeal is fruitless if not supported by, and based upon, the confidence, love, and esteem of his people. Though he speak with an authority really divine, though he be indeed the representative of God himself, though he may in right of his office threaten sinners with the most awful punishments, nevertheless these chastisements not being felt at present, and the priest not having the scourge, the lash, the prison, and the fine to punish the refractory, obedience depends alone on the good-will of the people; and generally speaking, obedience is refused when, instead of gentle persuasion, a sharp command is employed. What good can he pretend to effect, if he estranges heart and mind by hasty words, rough treatment, and harsh reproofs? How many obstacles will he not encounter at every step?

Let us then resolve to acquire and bring to perfection in ourselves more and more this important virtue, and let us meditate often upon those words of our Divine Master: *Beati mites quoniam ipsi possidebunt terram*; and these others: *Discite à me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde*.

29. The first step in such a case is to gain a thorough conviction of the necessity of this virtue; to consider in one or several special meditations the advantages which

it procures, and the deplorable consequences that are infallibly the result of the opposite fault.

It would be very profitable to ask the memory, whether the unfruitfulness of the ministry of many priests whom we have known, and still know, was not caused by a want of gentleness on their part, in their having used harsh and sharp words in some delicate circumstances, where gentleness would have gained everything. A priest may derive great benefit by observing parishes that are known to be well administered, wisely regulated, and remarkable for the good feeling which pervades them, and by ascertaining whether the pastor of those fortunate parishes is not a man of a gentle, charitable temper, and noted for his fatherly kindness.

The practical consequence of these observations and the reflections arising will be self-evident.

30. A priest must examine himself attentively to see if there be not some sharpness in his temper, some rudeness in his manners, and a too impulsive vivacity in his conversation; he must ask himself the reason of the cessation of his intercourse with such and such parishioners, and why they have now even become his enemies; and he will often find that gentleness would have prevented these deplorable divisions, and that, even now, a sweet and amiable charity will avail by itself to arrest their fatal consequences.

31. Generally, it may be said, if we fail in gentleness, it is because we fail in humility. Why do we give way to that quickness, that roughness, that temper? Because we have been piqued, crossed, vexed, humbled, thwarted in our actions. A little humility, and all will be endured with calmness, and without the least injury to gentleness.

One might wish to find nothing in one's ministry but consolations without bitterness, success without hindrances, victory and triumph without struggles; this is impossible. A priest, therefore, must know how to bear

contradiction, vexation, and humiliation, with that gentle calmness which will blunt the shafts of the enemy, and maintain, at least, peace in the soul.

But suppose that we have been grievously disappointed, that we have even been insulted, provoked, exasperated in a thousand ways by persecution, sometimes secret, sometimes open. Be it so; you have been injured before man, it is true, but you remain in the sight of God what you are, neither more nor less, in spite of your persecutors. How will anger benefit you? You will scandalize your parishioners without regaining their esteem; you will lose before God the grace, the merit, and the glory wherewith He would have rewarded your gentleness.

32. Some priests make a merit and a boast of governing by authority; they rule (they say) with the rod, in *virgâ ferreâ*, and nobody stirs. Thorough despots, they never open their lips but to dictate orders and launch thunders; the least resistance irritates them; advice, less than that, a trifling observation, wounds them, and elicits a shower of hard words.

Nevertheless, they are satisfied; nobody stirs; their authority is respected; no one dares to stand against them; fear restrains every heart, and ties every tongue; they are triumphant. Once more, they are satisfied; but, unfortunately, they alone are so.

Nobody stirs; it is true, not even to repair to the confessional; for, alas! how many sinners are hindered by such discouraging severity!

Their authority is respected; yes, outwardly; but could they see into the hearts of their parishioners, could they hear the secret conversations of which they are the subject, could they hear the bitter censures passed on their harshness and severity, what a disappointment!

Everything bends before them; no one holds up his head in their presence. It is quite possible; but what a sad triumph! Oh, how much rather would I see the child's head raised to gaze lovingly upon his father, than

to see the slave crouching to the ground before his master, in fear of the scourge!

What is then, after all, the effect produced by this rough and severe authority in a shepherd of souls? Here it is without any exaggeration:

In most parishes, and especially in those where there is little faith, such a shepherd will never win either esteem, or confidence, or affection, or respect. His flock raises obstacles and difficulties everywhere in his path, to drive him to seek another post. And when this change takes place there is a general rejoicing among the whole flock.

In some well-regulated parishes, where faith is strong, where the spirit of peace and conciliation is paramount, such a pastor is tolerated. Men groan and suffer, and long for better days, and ask for them in their prayers; but they are silent. As for affection, confidence, and esteem, they will be sought in vain in those poor hearts, bleeding, crushed, and broken, perhaps by that very man whose mission it was to comfort them.

But what is a thousand times more afflicting than all that we have mentioned, are the numerous acts of sacrilege committed, without his suspecting them, under the direction of such a pastor. How many sins kept back in the confessional! How many consciences sealed, and sealed every day more closely still, by the severity of the pastor! How many unworthy communions, and, consequently, how many souls in hell!

33. Many priests are deficient in gentleness only on certain days when they feel indisposed, and towards certain persons. They have, so to say, two faces, the one smiling, open, affable, gracious, such, in a word, as it should always be; the other, gloomy, austere, reserved, and cold as ice.

It is hardly imaginable that one single soul can imprint so many different emotions on the same face! To-day it will be the first of these faces which is chosen; to-morrow

it will be the other; why not the reverse? I do not know the reason; and how should I know it, since the possessor of these two faces is as ignorant as I am? It is inconstancy, caprice, eccentricity of character; sometimes, we must confess, it is the result of physical ailment; there should, however, always be an attempt to subdue it by an effort of virtue.

But more often the cause of this change of face is the difference of character in those with whom we are brought in contact. For instance, such a person presents himself; we love him on account of his intelligence, his manner, his social position; this is sufficient; an amiable and pleasing expression is sure to greet him. Another person, on the contrary, is without intelligence, and has none of these attractions; a stern expression, a cold manner, short, sharp, and even mortifying words will be his lot.

The first has wasted an hour in explaining that which wanted no explanation, and when he would withdraw, we try to detain him; the second has explained his business in two words, but he has omitted the most important, hurried as he was by the marks of impatience and haste which met him in abundance.

The greatest inconveniences result from such changeable conduct. If the benevolent countenance finds its apologists, the austere countenance has its detractors; and the discontent of the detractors is the more bitter in proportion as the praises of the apologists are exaggerated. If the austere countenance was for all without distinction, it is evident that all would be equally dissatisfied; but when some persons are as kindly, as others are coldly, received, it follows that those who never fail to be coldly received add to their discontent a certain jealous venom, which ends by making them indignant against a pastor whom they would delight to bless and reverence, if he treated all his flock with the same tenderness.

Oh, how this painful partiality in the common father of the whole parish injures the fruits of his ministry! And how can the evil fail to be augmented if his partiality can, with any shadow of probability, be attributed to motives, the smallest suspicion of which is an outrage on the priesthood?

34. In this matter, as in many others, men of the world are excused; ecclesiastics never.

When a man of the world is angry, and exasperated on account of a trifling opposition, it is wrong, no doubt, but generally it passes unnoticed; he is hasty, very hasty, his friends say, but he has a good heart; and there the matter ends. When a woman of the world has not exactly named the article which she requires to complete her brilliant toilet, her face flushes, her features are altered, her rage burns; it is a volcano in eruption, an earthquake; but the commotion does not last long; and all this produces no very great scandal. It would be otherwise should such outbreaks be remarked in a woman who makes an open profession of devotion. Such a woman, who should be guilty of bursts of anger for mere trifles, would cause much scandal, and furnish the wicked with a dangerous weapon for their attacks upon religion.

Alas! what will be the consequence if the priest himself sets the example of this fault? He whom every one wishes to see, where, indeed, he ought to be, at the height of perfection! What would be thought if, on account of an incautious word escaping from the lips of a poor servant-maid, a beadle, a brother priest, or any one else, he were seen immediately to frown, to knit his brows, and to collect (if one may say so) in his head all the elements of a storm, which immediately proclaims its presence by the lightning of his eyes, and by the roll of thunder produced by his angry words?

Oh, what scandal! what scandal! if a priest should be guilty of such excess; and how many acts of virtue would be necessary to neutralize and efface it, if, indeed, it

can ever be effaced, from the remembrance of his parishioners!

35. Why do you speak when you are in a passion, since you know, by sad experience, that each word that drops from your lips under such circumstances lowers you in the esteem and affection of your hearers?

But you reply, to remain silent is painful and most difficult. Granted; yet since, considering everything, it is easier to be silent in such a case than to speak without bitterness and violence, be silent. You think, perhaps, that after a few bitter words your heart will be calmed. Not at all; the more you say, the more you will increase the irritation.

From the first emotion results bitterness; from bitterness, anger; from anger, violence; and this devouring flame, which makes rapid strides every instant, is fed by your sharp and cutting words. Remain silent; think of God, Who sees you; silently invoke Jesus and Mary; the tempest will have passed away, your soul is calm, your neighbor edified, and God pleased.

When reprimand must be given, when a fault has been committed, and you feel obliged to reprove it, I advise you again, either to repress your anger or to postpone the reproof. "We must," says a pious author, "calm our own heart to be in a fit state to direct the hearts of others, and to remedy their weaknesses." Passion does not cure passion, it excites and inflames it.

But the fact is, you say, this reproof cannot be postponed. Well, then, take a middle course, compose yourself as well as you can; point out, in a few well-weighed words, slowly spoken, what ought to have been done, what has been done, and what must now be done; then, if you perceive that you are likely to lose your temper, stop there, and finish by saying that you do not feel disposed to enter more particularly into the matter. If all this is said with calmness and holy moderation, it will give the most favorable idea of your piety, and, by a

necessary consequence, will multiply the fruits of your ministry.

36. Some priests are rude only in their manner, and in externals. A person who sees them but once, or casually, is struck by this apparent rudeness, and naturally infers that the interior is no more amiable than the exterior.

Nevertheless, this inference is wrong. The foundation is good, sometimes excellent ; but as this foundation does not manifest itself at once, those only can appreciate its goodness who have had time to analyze and observe it at leisure. It is a pity indeed that there should be so much difficulty in reaching the heart, and in discovering that it is as good and gentle as the exterior would indicate the contrary.

The great majority of persons will have no time for such a study. Besides, they have only one matter to settle, some information to ask, a difficulty of conscience to clear up ; in short, the affair may be ended at a single interview, and even in a few minutes. If during this short time the natural good qualities of the character do not manifest themselves, and the roughness of the exterior alone is seen, they will naturally carry away a very unfavorable impression of the whole character.

Hence the great importance of correcting any outward roughness or bluntness, and of making a rule always to give a kind and amiable reception to all who present themselves, even should their conversation be dull, or should you be occupied, and really desirous of being left alone. Above all, try to correct any harshness in the voice, bluntness of manners, and cold expression of eye and feature ; be careful not to hurry the conversation, which is always the case when you come to the point too hastily ; when you multiply questions to settle the matter at once ; or even when you remain silent during any considerable time, showing thereby that if you do not maintain the conversation, it is because you are anxious to let it drop.

37. Sometimes it will happen that you will be obliged to refuse a request. This event is not rare, but it is a critical matter. We will suppose that you have the best reasons for your refusal; we agree then that no concession ought to be made.

But take care, lest the force of these reasons by which you are struck make you too harsh in repulsing the importunity which besets you to obtain the desired object. Remember then that the more pressing is this importunity the more painful will be your refusal; if to the pain which must accompany this refusal, you add that which your harshness must cause, you will inflict a double wound. What is to be done? Soften the pain of the refusal by the gentle kindness with which you explain your motives. Should your reasons for refusing be a hundred-fold stronger than they are, they can never justify your urging them with passion and unkindness.

38. It is especially in dissertations, discussions, and arguments, that gentleness is liable to be lost. Few, indeed, know how to maintain their self-possession on such occasions; and what painful regrets follow these passionate discussions!

Before entering upon a discussion we ought to collect ourselves as in the presence of God, unite ourselves in the closest spirit of faith to our Lord Jesus Christ, and as the point of departure take the three following maxims: First: I ought to desire, not the triumph of my own opinion, but that of truth. Secondly: in the course of the discussion, my opponent, even should he have, as I believe, the worse case to maintain, will nevertheless say many things which may be useful to me, and which may perhaps modify, and that considerably, my own opinion. Thirdly: after all I may be wrong, and consequently I must not commence the discussion by obstinately clinging to such silly prejudices as tend to make me suppose that I am certainly right.

If I do not accept these principles, I shall be carried away in my argument ; obstinately weilded to my own opinion, bitter, sarcastic, and perhaps insolent in the heat of the debate, and all this, far from increasing, will seriously diminish, the force of my reasoning ; for, if it costs little to submit to arguments urged with gentleness and moderation, it is a great sacrifice, of which few are capable, to adjudge the victory to an adversary who argues with passion.

Besides, if we pay attention, we shall always see, after a hot discussion, that if we had spoken with more calmness and moderation, success would have been more speedy, and more certain.

39. It must not be supposed that the virtue of gentleness is wounded only by outbursts of passion ; we see those who never yield to those impetuous emotions, and who yet offend their friends and neighbors by sharp speeches, which, like keen shafts, inflict a multitude of wounds not easily healed. These words are sometimes coarse thrusts which might well be termed coarse insolence : at other times they are finer thrusts, malignant irony, biting epigrams, the more keenly resented by their object, because the smiles of the bystanders applaud the refinement of the hit. Sometimes also equivocal, obscure, puzzling expressions are used, which leave the mind disquieted ; it is not clear whether they mean to express dissatisfaction, ill-temper, or some other unkind feeling. All this more or less wounds the virtue of gentleness, and should never be found in the priest.

40. Let us then wage a constant and incessant war against all those failings which are condemned by gentleness. Still, we must not let our gentleness degenerate into a feeble and yielding cowardice. Let us imitate the Saints, who knew how to be firm when the holy rules of the Church or the principles of sound morality made it a duty. Let us, likewise, be firm when there is

need ; but when it is necessary to be firm, let us also show that gentleness has not been destroyed by firmness, but that it still forms the groundwork of our character. Let us be resolved to convince others, that to be firm compels us, as it were, to do violence to ourselves.

If we have habitually the gentleness of the lamb, and are firm so to say, only exceptionally, we shall rarely find any obstacles in the way of our pious designs. Even in applying rules religiously severe, we shall find the path levelled before us, if gentleness is, so to speak, our fulcrum.

For we must not deceive ourselves in this ; ordinarily it is not the principles which irritate those on whom we wish to impose them, but it is rather the sharp, imperious, and often unskilful manner in which we attempt to apply them. Principles rest on very reasonable and very wise laws ; and when the wisdom of these laws is brought out in the language of gentleness and kindness, it is surprising to see the sacrifices which are obtained, and the difficulties which are surmounted.

CHAPTER IV.

OF ATTRACTIVE PIETY.

41. THE great aim which the priest, and more particularly the pastor of souls, ought incessantly to strive after, is the establishment of the reign of piety in the hearts of men. The great sinners he must endeavor to reform ; the righteous, the saints even, he must endeavor to render more righteous, more saintly still—in one word, *perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect.*

To effect this transformation, this perfecting, it is absolutely indispensable to implant the love of virtue and

piety, to destroy the prejudices which always more or less hinder their attainment, and to substitute for the false ideas which exist concerning the service of God, right, exact, and consolatory ideas, such as will inspire the hope that the practice of virtue will procure, even in this world, lasting and true happiness.

To render virtue attractive : here, then, is one of the essential duties of the priest ; and how shall he render virtue attractive ? Far more by his example than by his teaching ; nevertheless, it is by the union and employment of the two that he will succeed.

His moral character and feeling must be consistent, enlightened, exact, in conformity with that of the holy and learned priests who are universally esteemed and loved. Together with this, let him set an example of those attractive virtues which ravish all hearts as soon as they are seen, and he will most certainly attain his end with the utmost facility.

We have a most important observation to make on this point, to which we have already alluded in speaking of gentleness. When we say that piety must be made attractive, we do not mean that it should be stamped with that excessive tolerance so enthusiastically praised by the irreligious. The tolerance which violates the rules of the Church, or the pure laws of Christian morality, is a mere prevarication, which may win the applause of the enemies of religion, but which wrings the heart of the pious faithful, most of all when it is a priest who sets them the example of this cowardly and pitiful indulgence. This is the first danger to be avoided.

Here, again, is another hardly less to be dreaded ; against which certain priests strike, and are sometimes wrecked, believing that in order to render piety attractive they must, so to say, secularize themselves, by mixing in society and worldly amusements. Blind that they are not to perceive that such conduct does not make

piety attractive, but only proves that the spirit of piety is not the guiding principle of their life.

To discharge most scrupulously all the duties of his august profession, never to allow himself anything inconsistent with the gravity, dignity, and modesty of a priest ; to temper the rigorous exigencies of sacerdotal holiness by the amenity of his manners—in other words, by that happy union of kindness, gentleness, cordiality, and affability, which give an irresistible charm to virtue ; this should be the rule of the priest who desires, as far as lies in his power, to render piety attractive.

42. A stern and too severe exterior in a priest, otherwise remarkable for exalted piety, tends immediately to give a gloomy and forbidding notion of virtue.

But those who are inclined to dissipation and negligence must not abuse the following observations.

The piety of a priest engaged in the sacred ministry, is not the piety of a religious in the retirement of his monastery. It must be fully as sincere and exalted, more exalted even, in one sense, in the priest than in the simple religious ; but it must manifest itself in a particular form, and as it is intended to bring souls to God by its attractiveness, it would be untrue, and deficient in an essential particular, if by its repelling austerity it estranged those whom it ought to attract.

A priest should disengage his exterior from those trammels which hold him, as it were, boxed up, and give him an habitual stiffness which he should regard as ill-timed mortification ; he should not keep his eyes so fixed upon the ground as to condemn himself never to see further than the point of his shoe ; his brow should not be wrinkled and charged with heavy clouds, betraying an uneasy mind, and a piety painfully exaggerated ; nor should his lips be compressed, as if he had resolved never to suffer a smile to escape him.

Worldly men ridicule and jest at all this ; and pious and sensible persons say, more temperately, that it is

misplaced affectation ; and those good souls who are less enlightened, mistaking it for the sign of an exalted piety, despair of ever reaching such a sublime perfection, and lose heart. Therefore, we may conclude that this outward austerity, being useful to no one, and giving a very unfavorable idea of true piety, may well be reformed.

43. To engage in conversation rarely, and with an air of restraint ; to hurry after the few words he has let drop, and to manifest a regret that they have escaped his lips ; to introduce matters of religion at every opportunity, and often without opportunity ; to speak of it without tact and without discretion ; to take a sententious and authoritative part in such conversation, and upon this harsh and arid devotion to drop no balm of unction ; such conduct is certainly unlikely to win any one to piety, and will provoke many to say, that if religion demands such a change from them, they shall never care to become religious.

Jesus, our divine model, was far more amiable. What a charm in the noble simplicity of his exterior ! What kindness in the outpourings of his heart ! What ravishing sweetness amidst the most vexatious annoyances ! What touching grace in his discourses ! But also, how many hearts touched, consoled, and won ! How many inveterate sinners softened ! How many maxims, how many rules of conduct unheard of before, and entirely repugnant to our nature, accepted nevertheless, practised and appreciated through the winning and persuasive eloquence of the Divine Teacher ! Look up, O priest of Jesus Christ, and follow thy divine model : "*Inspice et fac secundum exemplar.*"

44. Again, if in the cold maxims of which we have spoken no exaggeration is observed, yet, unhappily, it is not unfrequently perceptible. In the presence of worldly men already frightened at the mildest form of Christian morality, the maxims of an exalted perfection are taught, counsels are mingled with precepts ; the speaker will be

always throwing himself by system, perhaps also by character, into a repelling excess of extreme severity. To sinners whose weakness requires gentle consideration with the precautions of a true zeal, he will employ the harsh and severe language which, at most, is suitable only for a religious. He will be in arms immediately against a careless word, which an indiscreet tongue has let slip, and which it were better to pass unnoticed ; he will draw out in theological formula any point of morality which may be lightly transgressed in the course of conversation, and will say, as from St. Thomas and from Suarez : *Non licet*. This is not all. He will give vent to bitter tirades against the hardened sinners of the parish, showing his entire hopelessness of their return to virtue.

Is this rendering religion attractive? Is such devotion of God? Would St. Francis de Sales, who won so many souls by the amenity of his zeal, have approved such principles, and have made them the rule of his conduct?

45. There are others, priests employed in the ordinary ministry, who, mistaking the nature of true devotion, pass in the eyes of the world as lost in some indefinable ideal of false perfection which repulses sinners. They are supposed to live in so high a sphere, that ordinary people dare not approach them ; and only a very few pious souls are seen gathered round their tribunal.

The great sinners for whom Jesus Christ came upon earth, and who, he said, *have need of a physician*, dare not address a man who, as they think and say, knowing only the failings of devout Christians, would be horrified at the recital of their enormous sins.

The injudicious piety of priests of this character (a piety which should on no account be confounded with that true spirituality which is the glory of the saints, and which is the very sublimity of wisdom), completely paralyzes their ministry. Their conversations, their

reading, their public and private exhortations, are marked with that devotion which in some respects seems exalted, but which is not always a devotion of God. The world, which cannot comprehend such a devotion, calls it narrow-minded and pitiful; and unhappily we must confess that it has this character. Thus, to value only the souls of a chosen few, to regard great sinners as utterly reprobate, to take almost no pains to attract and to gain them, to sum up all piety in a multitude of insignificant practices, to adopt a rule of perfection, strict and invariable, and to refuse to acknowledge any as holy, and really worth direction, except those who submit to this rule; to believe and admit without discrimination all that these eminent souls relate of their inner life, and the wonders which are worked there; to oblige them to put all this in writing, without ascertaining whether these lofty effects are based on a deep humility; let us confess that we have here marks of a piety exceedingly narrow and unenlightened.

A man employed in ordinary parish work, if he bears this character, will not effect a tenth part of the good required of him; he will not possess that frank, spiritual, and attractive piety which alone is loved, and is able to win the heart.

Without doubt he ought to be acquainted with the highest paths of perfection; without doubt he ought to cultivate with the greatest care the souls beloved by God, who are called to walk in these paths; and, unfortunately, these poor souls are only too often abandoned and deprived of the extraordinary help they need so much in their severe trials; but after all, this does not justify him in devoting his entire attention to them, and in making it generally understood that he attaches value and importance to their direction alone. It will be said of such a man, and with reason: No doubt he is an excellent priest, but he is not a good Curé.

46. A priest who is anxious to render piety attractive

must be in good earnest to cultivate his own, and, if it is possible, prevent it from being tarnished by the slightest stain. Should any striking faults be joined to his piety, even though they be not of a serious nature, the world will attribute to piety in general that which it is the first to condemn, and, assuming that all devout persons are alike, they will wage war against devotion, and enroll themselves wrongly against those who maintain that it is attractive.

The faults which more especially produce this sad effect are melancholy, unkind and rough words, rude manners, want of kind feeling and consideration, and, in general, everything which induces men to say of another that he is unamiable, and that his company is not to be desired.

47. Again, the mania of those priests who seem never happy except in the midst of storms, and persist in regarding severity as the first condition of success in the pastoral ministry, is exceedingly detrimental to piety, and deprives it of the charm with which it should always be clad.

Their zeal is always active in the regions of storms. For instance, have they advice to give? there is a storm. Have they a rebuke to inflict? a storm. Have they a sermon to preach? a storm. A confession to hear? a storm, and always a storm. They never open their mouth but to dictate their orders, to call to mind the strict requirements of religion; to expose the gravity of a fault in all its nakedness, imputing every degree of criminality to the defaulter. But to sympathize with human weakness, to impute a share in the sin to this, and to relieve the heart of the offender as far as possible from the burden, lovingly to point out the methods of reformation, and to set forth the free pardon which is in the bosom of the divine mercy, ready to be poured out; this is not the way of the priests of whom we are speaking; and thus their piety gains that rude aspect, that

severe and forbidding mien, which repulses a multitude of sinners, and never attracts one.

We must not hide the sin, nor even, to a certain point, the wickedness of the sinner ; but neither may we hide the remedy for the sin, and the merciful kindness which proffers it. Let us endeavor to obtain an entrance for remorse and repentance into the depths of the heart, through the door of confidence and love ; and when we thunder against sinners, let us not stifle, by the din of rebuking words, the merciful and gracious voice of Him who said to them : *Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis, et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos.*

48. The priest must be the pattern of his flock, *Forma facti gregis*. If he wish to make piety attractive, he will never succeed better than by displaying in himself a piety of this character ; but how shall he display it if he seldom or never visits his flock ?

If it be true, and, unfortunately, it cannot be denied, that there are some priests of a lazy, idle, and careless disposition, passing their time in useless and, perhaps, dangerous visits ; it is true that others, throwing themselves into the opposite excess, keep up with their flock only that intercourse which is absolutely necessary, thinking that the time occasionally devoted to charitable visits is lost. Who can say of a priest of this character, that he possesses an attractive piety ? If Christian charity allowed it, might it not be justly said to anybody who should affirm this, "What do you know about it?"

In fact it would be difficult to form a just idea of such a character ; for, after all, he is scarcely seen except in three different places : at church, at the bed of sickness, and at the door of the dead.

At church it is a matter of course for him to be devout, and his devotion at such a place makes very little impression ; besides, it cannot communicate itself there, and become, in due course, known to all, since he is the only person who can raise his voice in the sacred place. At

the bed of sickness his intercourse is confined to poor dying creatures, whom he takes pains to persuade, together with the mourning bystanders, that short exhortations are always the best for the sick. At the door of the dead he opens his lips only to speak in Latin, and certainly less there than anywhere can the qualities and character of his piety be ascertained.

But where does he spend the rest of his time? In his study. To be sure, he is not idle; look, if you ever gain admittance there, what an enormous collection he possesses of selections, treatises, and manuals, on chemistry, natural philosophy, advanced mathematics, geology, astronomy, etc. etc.

Oh, how sad! to live in the midst of a flock, to be its pastor, and to visit it as little as possible; never to run in search of the lost sheep; never to call them back by that paternal and kind voice, never heard in vain by the most hardened; never to edify them by sweet and holy exhortations; and when an unfortunate sinner, too feeble to go down into the pool, is every moment repeating, "*Hominem non habeo*," not to be at hand to say, "Here, my son, is the man you asked for." Most assuredly this is not to have a true zeal; this is not the true spirit of piety; and God grant that such a priest may never have to answer at the last judgment for the salvation of so many souls who will have fallen into hell, while their pastor, indifferent, and secluded in the privacy of his study, was exhausting all his affections and his intellect over a treatise upon physical science.

49. From the various details given above, may be gathered the line of conduct necessary for showing to the world the holy and engaging example of an attractive virtue.

Let us study, in his biography, as well as in his works, the manner of life of Saint Francis de Sales. It is the most beautiful type that can be proposed to priests engaged in the holy ministry.

Saint Francis was undoubtedly a man of eminent piety ; but this piety, so far from repelling, attracted and won everybody. When occasion demanded, he quitted his solitude ; but he appeared in the world only to attract by the charm of his sweet disposition and tender kindness. He was not averse to moderate amusement ; but he united with it so much grace, simplicity, and moderation, that his smile and his innocent jests were accepted, even by the world, as so many acts of virtue. He was unremitting in his attention to the souls of the fervent and the pious ; but he knew how to leave them alone in the fold when he learned that any wandering sheep needed the activity of his zeal. He was devotedly fond of study, and would have thought himself happy had he been able to bury himself in solitude, there to divide his time between prayer and work. But his outer engagements never suffered from his love of study ; everything had its proper time and rule ; so that prayer, intellectual occupations, and the works of zeal went on in unison, without interfering with each other, but on the contrary, helped each other. All his writings show his perfect knowledge of the holy rules of the Church, and of the true principles of sound theology ; but he knew how to apply them with such perfect discretion, tenderness, and caution, that, without ever infringing them, he appeared greatly to mitigate their severity. He deeply deplored every kind of disorder that he witnessed, but the serenity of his soul remaining unruffled at the sight of these disorders, he preserved that calmness, that holiness, that inexhaustible gentleness which he employed to remedy the disease which others would infallibly have aggravated by the impetuous severity of their zeal.

Let us imitate so beautiful a model, convinced that if our outward conduct were conformed to that of this holy bishop, like him we should perform veritable wonders among our people.

Let us, then, to work, and substitute for any rough-

ness in our manners, any intemperance in our language, any bitterness in our corrections, any extravagance in our zeal, any sullenness in our character, an harmonious whole of piety, gentleness, kindness, moderation, and sweetness, which shall bring blessings on our ministry, and win all hearts to Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER V.

CHARITY TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOR.

50. HERE, again, is one of the exterior virtues, contributing in no small degree to give a high idea of the holiness of the priest in whom it dwells; and consequently facilitating the operations of his zeal, and securing its success.

Charity is the cherished companion of gentleness and humility. They are three fair sisters, the delight of the society into which they are admitted, and of the hearts which give them a home. They are so closely interwoven one with the other, that, in many circumstances, they are indistinguishable.

But to return to charity, especially as considered in its relation to the priest, and as an external organ of zeal.

A parish is in truth a family, having the priest for its father in Jesus Christ. If the children of a family tear each other to pieces, it is assuredly an evil, and universally deplored. It is for the common father to prevent that evil, or, at least, to arrest its progress, if he has been unable to prevent its coming into existence.

But what if it be the father of the family himself who should tear to pieces his own children? The very idea makes us shudder.

No vice is more common among Christians than evil-

speaking; it is of all countries, all ages, all ranks. Should a priest, then, in the midst of such a universal laxity wish to prove himself the consistent apostle, and the sincere maintainer of the virtue of charity, he will win the higher admiration in proportion as those about him are guilty of violating this attractive virtue.

But, unfortunately, *flens dico*, certain priests, more inconsiderate than wicked, often imitate in this respect the conduct of the world.

What is Christianity without charity? Is not charity the fairest flower in its crown? And in what heart shall she reside, if the heart of the priest refuse to afford her a home?

A priest who never outrages charity, who never opens his lips in society but to divert the conversation of slanderers, and to justify the accused; who speaks kindly of everybody, and seems to have none but intimate friends in the world; such a priest is a perpetual preacher, an apostle blessed by God and men; and by his homilies touches more hearts and brings more souls to conversion than those thundering preachers who, after filling the house of God with the thunders of their voice, give the lie in private, by their criticisms and evil-speaking, to the lessons of virtue they teach in public.

Let us be filled with charity; penetrated with that virtue; declaring merciless war against all that may dry up its springs within us. Let us not have one drop of gall in our hearts, nor one sharp word upon our lips; let us love our brethren, never forgetting the oracle of the Divine Master, *the second commandment is LIKE unto the first (like unto! astounding words!)*—*Secundum autem simile est huic: diliges proximum tuum sicut te ipsum.*

51. The priest must begin by self-examination, and see if he holds the violation of charity in that lively horror with which every faithful Christian should regard it; then, should he discover that he has, unfortunately, serious and constant reason for self-reproach

in this important point, let him take courage and implore the assistance of God by frequent and fervent prayers, and form, at the foot of his crucifix, the free and energetic resolve to watch himself strictly, that he may for the future avoid uttering a single deliberate word which may offend against charity; he must go even further, and vow before God to speak kindly of everybody, and to defend all whom he hears condemned. It will soon be seen that charity dwells in the heart of the pastor, as in a sanctuary; and this virtue will gain him, most assuredly, the esteem and love of his people.

52. A satirical, sharp, and criticising spirit offends everybody. Satire sometimes raises a laugh; but after all, the pain that it occasions is greater than the pleasure it procures. With a kind heart and a moment's thought that the intended jest is but a poisoned arrow, which will wound, vex, and humiliate a brother in his tenderest feelings, would they not refrain from uttering it? But no; they have not this kind heart; habitual satirists generally have a cold and unloving soul.

A priest must therefore, for all these reasons, hold the satirical and defamatory spirit in abhorrence. The words befitting his character are words of kindness, gentleness, good-will, and conciliation. As for satirical, sharp, and cutting words, they must never find a place upon his lips.

No one will believe in the piety of a priest who, without scruple, and even with the accompaniment of a sardonic smile, will daily permit himself these biting jests, which often deeply wound the virtue of charity, of which he is by profession the apostle and teacher.

53. If the priest ought to forbid himself all kinds of satire, far more must he abstain from evil speaking. An evil-speaking priest is a scandalous priest; and here we use the word *scandalous* in all its theological strictness; that is to say, that an evil-speaking priest leads his hearers to speak ill of others after his example. And how is it possible that the deplorable propensity to evil

speaking, which is so general, should not be confirmed in those who see that the priests are equally, or perhaps more, addicted to sin than themselves?

Besides, dare any priest addicted to this sin denounce evil speaking from the pulpit, if he has been guilty of it immediately before ascending the steps, and is likely to be equally guilty as soon as he has come down? Will he not fear that his hearers, knowing his character only too well, will whisper around him these cutting words, unhappily so justly applicable, *Medice cura te ipsum*?

As for zeal, do not expect to find a grain of it in the evil-speaking priest. Zeal is the delicate blossom of charity; and charity he has banished from his heart. He has therefore no zeal for the salvation of souls, and without zeal what is the priest? If in spite of this he wishes to appear zealous, his fictitious efforts will be useless. God will not bless them, and the people will always oppose them with an obstinate resistance.

54. But the greatest curse to a priest, completely nullifying his zeal, would be to speak ill of those whose spiritual father he is, and whom he can benefit only so long as he testifies to them an unbounded devotedness and a paternal affection.

A priest who speaks ill of his parishioners must not only be guilty of malice, the necessary accompaniment of evil speaking, but his reason must be utterly faulty if he does not see that in allowing himself to cry down his parish he renders his ministry totally fruitless.

If we were acquainted with such a Curé, we should feel disposed to put to him the following questions: Can the ministry of the pastor be fruitful when he does not love his flock? Clearly not. Can the ministry of the pastor be fruitful when he is not loved by his flock? Clearly not. And when these two circumstances are combined, that is to say, when the pastor does not love his flock, and when the flock do not love their pastor, can any good be done? No; a thousand times, no.

Now, let us ask the following questions: A pastor who everywhere, under all circumstances, and before anybody, cries down his flock, exposes the secret miseries of his parish, attacks not only the whole flock, but wounds individuals by offensive personalities, uttered now and then even from the pulpit; a pastor who in every society lets it be seen that his parish is a burden to him; who sighs aloud for another post; who perhaps is already taking steps to obtain one,—can such a pastor love his flock? Can he say that he is beloved by them? If he should reply to these questions in the affirmative, no one would believe him, and I venture to say that he would not himself believe in the sincerity of his statement, and that his own heart would give the lie to his lips. He would be too well aware indeed, as unhappily everybody else, that his ministry is in a lamentable condition, utterly and completely ruined.

55. As to calumny, properly so called, we need not mention it; because who could believe that the tongue of a priest, every day bathed with the blood of Jesus Christ, should afterwards shed abroad the cruel venom of calumny? But if this sin, in all its odious characteristics, inspires every priest with sentiments of horror and disgust, can we say the same of certain inaccurate exaggerations which are so quickly transformed by malignant people into downright calumny?

We know nothing more common in society than exaggeration of this kind. We feel sure that a single word will be enough to inspire every priest with a salutary horror of it.

A fault has been committed, a misfortune has happened to somebody; what a windfall for our exaggerators! The simple account of that misfortune or that fault, as we heard it, would not offer sufficient interest; it wants point. Well, be quiet; the interest, the point, will soon be before you. For instance, such and such circumstances are sure to have accompanied the

principal facts ; we introduce those circumstances ; the precise name of the offender has not been pronounced, but everything betrays that such a person is the guilty party ; let us say that it is he without question ; it has not been stated at least that he had committed more than one fault of this nature, but it is known that he has committed many others of a different kind ; let it be understood that this is not the first occurrence of the sort ; his intention has not been openly accused ; let us blacken this intention a little, and prove, by a multitude of other facts known or unknown, that he is a wretch, and that his conduct is disgraceful.

We must never allow ourselves exaggerations so contrary to the divine charity of which we are the apostles. As priests of Jesus Christ, we must be penetrated with that spirit of wisdom, gravity, and moderation, which will change all our words into oracles, and will impart to them somewhat of that august and holy character which adorns our souls.

Let us never exaggerate what we have to say, nor mask the truth with that borrowed veil which disfigures it. Let us shun not only exaggeration, but everything of the nature of exaggeration ; for instance, rapid utterance, emphatic gestures, forced energy in our expressions, the refutation of the reasons pleaded for the justification of the guilty ; a self-satisfied, pleased, and eager air in our recital of facts ; the frequent use of epithets and superlatives ; in a word, everything which betrays an exaggeration more or less impassioned.

Let us also cherish a wholesome dread of meriting the reproach of indiscretion, by talking of matters on which prudence commands us to be silent, and by revealing the secrets confided to us.

Men give to the priest the honorable title of *discreet person*, and this title must be merited not only by his office as priest, but equally by his wise, prudent, and cautious conduct. An incautious priest, who is known

to be such, will inevitably commit great faults which must often end seriously ; and one of these effects will be, that he will find himself distrusted by many who would have given him their entire confidence had he been grave, prudent, and reserved.

Every priest who is a great talker is, in general, imprudent. Not being in the habit of bridling his tongue, and allowing himself unbounded freedom of speech, he betrays every secret and every confidence.

We do not speak, however, of sacramental secrecy, because there is something in it so inviolable and so sacred, that we shall never believe it to be violated in any circumstance whatever. But, this secrecy excepted, a priest, thoughtless, incautious, a newsmonger, a great talker, will say all that he knows, and even what he does not know. The most private confidence, the most profound secret, the most delicate matters, family mysteries, all will be revealed, sometimes by a straightforward communication, at other times by certain roundabout sentences, certain hints accompanied by reserve, but reserve so flimsy and so transparent, as to betray, without possibility of mistake, what the priest would not venture to state openly to the world.

Can a priest of such character be honored with the confidence of his parishioners ? Would he himself trust any one so indiscreet as himself ? And when he has not the confidence of his parishioners, what good will he do among them ? If they say of him, with all the charity they can bestow on him : He is a good priest, if you will, but he is so inconsiderate ! so imprudent ! so indiscreet ! so full of words ! so little reserved in his conversation ! —what good, we ask again, can such a priest do in the parish confided to his care ?

57. Next, we have to speak a few words on more important matters, antipathy, indifference, ill-will, we hardly like to say, hatred. What can be more humiliating to us than the vulgar saying which attributes to the

ill-will of a priest a perpetual duration, an indelible character?

We said before, and wish to repeat it : Where is charity to find a home if the heart of the priest is closed against her?

A priest may have reasons, and good reasons, for not visiting certain persons, or only at rare intervals ; yet, he must not deceive himself in this important matter ; let him examine his conscience seriously before his crucifix ; because, if he cease visiting those whom he used to visit before only from the feeling of a real or imagined offence, or, worse still, from their want of courtesy or politeness, he ought to reproach himself bitterly for his fault ; he ought to remember that, as long as his antipathy, his indifference, his ill-will exists, he will scandalize his parishioners, destroy the happy prestige attending his reputation of zeal and piety, and ruin his ministry.

It is hardly credible how priests, otherwise good and even pious, pass whole years in the sad state just now described, and that without any anxiety or disquiet, and with a security of conscience truly astonishing. Everybody knows that they have fallen out with such and such of their parishioners, that all intercourse between them has either ceased, or is so constrained as to be equivalent to open rupture. Not only is the parish aware of the fact, but the wicked rejoice at it ; the revengeful especially regard it as a justification for the continuance of their hatred, and the pious grieving to hear what is said of their pastor, deploring his blindness, bow their heads, and pray God to enlighten him. If he knew that his conduct displeased God, and scandalized man, assuredly he would at once abandon it ; but unfortunately he is blind to the culpability of his conduct in this respect.

58. In conclusion, let us adopt some rules of conduct in reference to this virtue. Our hearts must be the

sanctuary of charity ; no root of bitterness must be allowed a place there. We must preserve the holiness of our conversation unsullied by raillery ; we must cherish a horror of evil speaking and calumnious exaggerations. Even the slightest feeling of resentment for an offence offered us must be that very moment plucked from the heart, lest the sun go down upon our wrath and ill-will. Let the absent ever find in us brothers, friends, devoted allies ; let the faults, let the crimes even, from the narration of which we cannot escape, furnish us, at least, with opportunities of exercising our charity in seeking some happy expedient for justifying the accused.

Lastly, let it be an established rule always to speak the greatest possible good of all whose names are mentioned before us, and to inculcate charity incessantly, whether in public or in our private intercourse with the flock. Oh that we might have always at the bottom of our heart, and on our lips, those loving words of St. John, in which he paints so well the tenderness of his soul : “ *My little children, love one another* ” — *Filioli diligite alterutrum !*

CHAPTER VI.

MODESTY.—DIGNITY.—POLITENESS.

59. WE shall say in entering upon the practical details of this chapter that the first thing necessary is a severe self-examination and scrutiny, to ascertain whether we do not, in many instances, and even habitually, violate the laws of *modesty*, *gravity*, and *politeness*.

Although external are more striking than internal defects, and consequently more readily observed, it is nevertheless very true that we often have many which offend everybody, and which we alone fail to discover.

As we have already spoken, in the second Chapter, of the *gravity* and *modesty* which are so becoming to the priest, we are content to touch upon this matter lightly, in the form of self-examination, with a few additions.

Does my outward behavior, as a whole, bear the imprint of the *modesty* of Jesus Christ? Does it manifest the candor and the serenity which should reign in my soul? Am I not inclined to look at all about me, both persons and things, with a curious and inquisitive air? Does not this give me an appearance of levity and dissipation? Is my manner of walking what it ought to be, dignified, grave, and manifesting that natural, simple, and artless modesty which is so pleasing in a priest? Is it not too rapid, and too hasty? (Let us not forget that it should be rather slow than quick.) In walking, are not my arms and legs thrown about everywhere, giving me an awkward, vulgar, and clownish air?

Are not my clothes remarkably dirty? is not my cassock covered with stains, which seem to have wholly destroyed the original color? is it not so threadbare and torn, that all who see me in it must think it no longer wearable? have I not laid aside the cincture and band, and, by a painful compromise, adopted certain secular fashions in my dress? Is my conversation serious? Am I careful to exclude from it all excessive gayety, frivolity, and, with stronger reason, buffoonery? Have I not in this imitated the common people, and have I not adopted the low, coarse, and vulgar expressions of peasants? Am I not the first to start the conversation when I know such expressions will come in? Do I never proceed to an improper familiarity, which displays itself by loose expressions, marked freedoms, and gestures severely condemned by priestly modesty; as, for instance, seizing the hand, tapping the shoulder, pushing as a wrestler, and all this with jesting behavior, coarse words, and bursts of laughter? Am I not too little reserved, and too familiar with the persons living under my roof? Do

I not daily waste too much time in chatting and laughing with my relations, my pupils, my servant, my neighbors, without uttering a word during long hours which at all declares me to be an ecclesiastic and a man of God? Do I not forget myself, unhappily, so far as to extend this familiarity to holy matters? Is not this the source of my improprieties in the church, my talking and bursts of laughter in the sacristy, my want of recollection and gravity at the altar, my scandalous haste in administering the sacraments, and the disgusting dirt which strikes the eyes of every one who enters the church? In a word, am I clad in all places, in all circumstances, and before all ranks of persons, with that attractive modesty of Jesus Christ which charmed all those who witnessed it, and without which no priest can win the esteem and veneration of the people? *Modestia vestra nota sit omnibus hominibus.* (Philip. iv. 5.)

60. If we speak of politeness and decorum, it is certainly not to enter into the endless details of the subject.

Several treatises are published, in which all the rules of politeness are laid down, and to them we refer our readers.

We would only recommend here a few very important points, which demand special attention.

First: In case the priest is not yet fully acquainted with the customs of the locality where he exercises his holy office, he must inquire into them, and conform to them scrupulously. There are certain general laws of decorum which are everywhere the same, and of which he can hardly be ignorant; but there are also in each parish particular practices, certain local customs, which require to be studied. These local customs cannot be guessed beforehand, and the people, who from time immemorial have been used to them, and cannot suppose them to be unknown, would be offended at seeing them despised by the new pastor. It is most important to be fully acquainted with everything to which the parish-

ioners are attached, as regards good manners. It will not be considered, in general, any great merit in a priest if he follow these rules carefully, since his adhesion to them is considered as natural and indispensable on his part ; but for that very reason, he would be severely judged if he were to dispense with them ; and if, as we suppose, those laws have nothing reprehensible, but, on the contrary, are good and useful, or simply indifferent, he would be very wrong not to comply with their minutest demands.

61. It is especially advisable to ascertain the rules of politeness and courtesy observed by our predecessor. Experience teaches that besides general and local courtesies, there are also individual courtesies founded upon the tastes, habits, and even fancies of every one. For instance, your predecessor had established certain courtesies of this nature ; without being everywhere obligatory, he regarded them as such in his locality ; they were, besides, good, useful, and of a nature to conciliate the esteem and affection of the parishioners to the pastor ; such courtesies must be continued, and their use perpetuated.

Should you not do so, your conduct in the matter will be compared with that of your predecessor ; he will have all the advantage of the comparison, and your reform will be attributed to a want of politeness or of education, or to a mania of changing everything, or to a want of respect for your predecessor, or even to a disdainful pride which induces you to maintain with your flock nothing beyond a strictly necessary intercourse. Now it is clear that such suppositions are very painful, and more or less endanger the success of your ministry.

62. A priest in a small parish, and especially in the country, ought generally to be the first to salute those whom he meets, and to say a few friendly words to them if he knows them personally ; the more so if they are his parishioners ; (the words may, and perhaps ought, to

be omitted towards persons of the other sex, particularly if they are young.)

In such circumstances a few words of edification find a ready place. It also gives pleasure to those whom we meet that we testify a lively interest in their health and that of their family. All this may be said with modesty, gentleness, and kindness. Familiarity, a free and easy air, should never appear on such occasions.

63. Little children should always be welcomed with the greatest gentleness and benevolence; the pastor may trace the cross upon their foreheads with his thumb; he may even kiss the little boys, especially when they come of their own accord to offer their faces; it is as well that the kiss should be given on the forehead.

It is impossible to show too much kindness and interest to these children. Besides giving them confidence, and disposing them to more sincere confession, these marks of tenderness touch their heart, and attach them to him who will perhaps be their pastor during the remainder of his life.

Besides, it must not be forgotten that the affection of the parents is gained with that of the children. If, as opportunity offers, any marks of attachment and interest are shown to the children, if any edifying words or religious advice is addressed to them, all is immediately carried home to the parents, with an air of satisfaction in which they will not fail to share.

Experience teaches that it is not always the most important works which bring the blessing on the pastor's ministry; there are many small details which contribute as much and more than those great works to conciliate the esteem and veneration of the people.

64. We should like, before passing to another subject, to exhaust the present matter, on account of the great importance we attach to it. Let us conclude by giving, in recapitulation, an idea, as exact as possible, of the mod-

esty, gravity, dignity, and courtesy which we love to find in a priest.

What do we remark in one who unites all these virtues? The first thing which strikes us is a frank and open countenance, which gives, at the first glance, an air of amiability which at once attracts; the look is sweet, benevolent, and modest; the mouth wears a gracious smile which tells of kindness; the outward appearance and attitude has nothing stiff or vulgar; it is natural and without affectation; the movements and gestures are few, betraying nothing abrupt or hasty; the walk is grave, calm, and quiet; the worthless trifles spread everywhere on the road never attract the attention; the conversation is never noisy, vehement, or passionate; it is full of sweetness and moderation; it is neither prodigal nor sparing of words—that is to say, he speaks too little to be considered a great talker, and enough to avoid reserve; discussions are very rare, and when they cannot be avoided no vehemence is ever observable, but, on the contrary, a sweetly modulated gravity; bursts of laughter are proscribed, and should they escape involuntarily, he quickly returns to an amiable smile, which is the *ne plus ultra* of the expression of the joy which modesty allows to ecclesiastics. The dress is such as to escape censure; no one says it is elegant; no one says it is dirty; every one says it is suitable.

When a priest unites in his person the outward qualities we have enumerated, he never appears without having it said, "There is an amiable priest; there is a holy and worthy priest!"

65. The characteristic features of the modest priest which we have just indicated must, naturally, recall to the minds of our readers such or such venerable priest whom they have known and admired, and whom, perhaps, they know and admire still. In looking around, it is difficult not to find some holy ecclesiastic to whom our

portrait well applies: to this model we must strive to conform ourselves.

Let us, if possible, tear from our eyes the bandage which prevents us from seeing ourselves as we are; then let us take up our position before that holy priest whose modest dignity and holy life we have so often heard extolled.

Let us see what there is in him which is wanting in us. Let us examine ourselves on all that concerns *modesty*; and certainly such an examination will not be unprofitable.

Lastly, what more perfect model can we desire than that offered to us in the adorable person of our Divine Master? Ah! if we would earnestly look into the face of the precious Jesus with the application of the painter who would produce his subject on his canvas, how quickly we should know what we ought to do, and to leave undone. In fact, let us only ask a few questions, and see the light which will burst from them.

Had Jesus an absent and careless air? Had Jesus a cold, gloomy, and contemptuous aspect? Was Jesus addicted to free and impetuous movements and gestures? Did Jesus walk hastily and hurriedly? Did Jesus wear clothing of a fastidious elegance, or of a disgusting dirtiness? Did Jesus stop on His road to look at trifles? Did Jesus give vent to bursts of laughter? Did Jesus speak much? Did He speak with vehemence? and used He to speak of trifles and follies?

How sad to think that, without a moment's hesitation, we return to these questions an answer entirely different to that which we ought, perhaps, to give if we had to render a faithful account of our own conduct! And yet, O God, who shall imitate Thy Divine Son, if it be not His ministers!

CHAPTER VII.

DISINTERESTEDNESS MANIFESTED BY WORKS.

66. WHAT is zeal? It is the love of souls. What is avarice? It is the love of money. Can these two affections, essentially opposed one to the other, the one wholly material, the other wholly spiritual, the one blessed by God, and the other withered by His curse, exist together in the same soul?

Jesus answers that question: "You cannot," He says, "you cannot serve God (that is to say, love Him), and at the same time serve the god of riches." "*Non potestis Deo servire et mammonæ.*" No; we repeat it, the love of riches, which is wholly material, cannot exist in the soul together with the love of God, which is wholly spiritual and divine! Is it not, then, evident that the love of souls, being likewise wholly spiritual in its nature, cannot reign in a heart together with the love of money?

How powerfully is the saying of Jesus confirmed by experience! As regards zeal, where shall we find the heroes of Christianity? Will it be among the lovers of money? To put the question is to solve it.

Suppose a grain of avarice to exist in the heart of a Paul, a Xavier, a Vincent Ferrer, a Dominic, and so many others, and you will see whether they abandon their relations, their country, or, above all, their bags of gold for the salvation of souls. No; no sooner would these great souls have attached themselves to gain, than you would see them lessening their mighty proportions, growing cold and withered, substituting narrow, earthly, and low aims in place of those noble feelings which once impelled them to the conquest of souls.

And such a hateful difference is quickly observed by

the people. In proportion as a priest who is disinterested, generous, kind to the poor, is extolled, so one who is selfish, miserly, inflexible in exacting all his rights, is despised. The former touches them, edifies them, and inspires respect and an unbounded confidence ; the latter scandalizes them, estranges them from religion and its ministers, and furnishes them with excuses for clinging more closely to the false riches of earth. If, then, we would exercise among men a fruitful and honorable ministry, we must gain the reputation of generosity and disinterestedness; and that we may obtain such a glorious reputation, let us manifest our disinterestedness by our works.

67. When men can say of a priest, "He keeps nothing for himself," they give him the highest possible praise. These few words have been appropriated by custom to express, by a single stroke of the pencil, the exact idea of a priest—the friend of the poor, and the avowed enemy of that cold selfishness and that sordid covetousness against which his calling obliges him to declaim from the pulpit.

When a parish possesses a priest of this character, not only do the people venerate him, not only do they give him their confidence and affection, but they feel happy and proud to possess such a pastor ; every one loves to speak of his alms, his good works, his many acts of kindness ; vainly would he conceal the good that he does, vainly would he attempt to hide from his left hand the good done by his right ; all is known, all is published abroad ; that glory he wishes to escape abundantly surrounds him, and is reflected with immense advantage on his divine ministry !

68. There is a work of mercy which gives the highest idea of disinterestedness in a priest, namely, his frequent visits to the sick poor, and his readiness to assist them at his own expense.

When the poor are afflicted with sickness, no one can

imagine the extent of their distress, especially in the country. Without medical attendance, without medicines, without the constant attention which their condition requires, one may say that their destitution is complete. Who, then, will help these unfortunate creatures?

Is it not the pastor of these suffering sheep who ought, before all others, to provide the comforts which they need? Let him, then, carry to them not only the spiritual consolations of his holy ministry, but, in addition, those plenteous alms which he knows himself to be so necessary!

No doubt, the clergy are not rich in our times; still, in many country parishes the richest inhabitant is often the priest. He, therefore, ought, more than all others, to distinguish himself by his alms deeds to the poor.

Often laymen (even without being religious men) do more for the poor than the parish priest, though the latter has equal means of doing all that the former do; such conduct has a tendency to lower the whole priesthood; it would give even scandal, if men knew that the priest, who thus suffers himself to be surpassed in almsgiving by irreligious men, makes niggardly savings, or buys houses and lands, while shutting his ears to the cries of the poor, whose wants are, nevertheless, so well known to him.

One day, having occasion to visit, in a retired village, a man of the world, who lived unhappily without religion, we were told that he was gone out. As we asked if he would soon return, the servant said, "He is with his sick man." On making further inquiries about an act which seemed so charitable, we discovered that a poor man was living near, who had a sore on his leg, and had no one to tend him. Now that man of the world used to go regularly every day and discharge all the offices of a Sister of Charity to this poor soul. That very day, we were told, he had gone out with lint in one

pocket, and a bottle of wine in another, without counting bread, medicine, and money, with which he took care to supply his sick man plentifully.

Is it possible that such deeds can be done without being publicly applauded? And can men fail to contrast with these facts others of a wholly different nature with which the covetous priest is so justly reproached?

69. You inveigh against your flock ; you say that their stinginess is an insurmountable obstacle to all kinds of good works ; you envy the lot of such and such a pastor, who with a single word can open every purse, and sometimes receives more than he asks for.

But, tell me, have you ever examined your conscience, to know if you yourself set the example of disinterestedness and generosity? Do you enjoy this character in your parish? Is your praise in the mouth of all your poor?

If such be the case, your flock undoubtedly is greatly in the wrong in not following your holy precepts ; it is to be blamed for leaving you to advance alone in the path of charity and good works. But let us confess that such a case is rare ; very seldom is a priest left alone in this holy course. Let him push on with a generous zeal, running therein with a heart all burning with the fire of love ; let him be as ready to give as the miser is to receive, and he will soon see that his flock wanted rather the good example than that generosity in which he thought them wholly deficient.

70. With certain honorable exceptions, men are not naturally fond of giving. That unhappy inclination known by the name of attachment to this world's good things, is a notable portion of the sad heritage left us by our first parents.

To overcome this deplorable propensity, some encouragement is needed ; one must be urged, either by an imperious sense of duty, or by an attractive example, or some other powerful consideration. But observe, sense of duty, attractive example, powerful consideration, all

that can be imagined most weighty, will remain fruitless in good works, unless the priest himself set the attractive example of which we have just spoken.

But what if the priest were not only a stranger to all acts of charity, but if he were supposed to keep under lock and key some beloved treasure ; or if, from time to time, like the children of this world, he were to buy up houses or lands ? What if, through all the neighborhood, people retailed from one to the other numerous acts, testifying his meanness, his sordid parsimony, his scandalous avarice ? Is it not evident that his example would be contagious, and that, as he never opened his purse-strings for any charitable purpose, his parishioners would believe themselves by no means bound to untie theirs ?

Does any one believe that St. Vincent de Paul would have obtained the large sums of money which came to him from all parts, had his heart been narrow, without generosity, without charity, without disinterestedness ? Who does not see that the liberality of others measured itself by his ; that men gave without stint to him, only because he gave up all that he himself possessed ; and that, a thousand times more occupied with the poor than with himself, he reduced himself, without perceiving it, to a still lower state of poverty than that of tens of thousands whose misfortunes he unremittingly assuaged ?

71. Let us beware of scandalizing our people, as, alas ! has been done sometimes, by leaving boards of gold at our death.

Oh, how religion suffers when this sad and hideous sight is exposed to view ! There are those bags so greedily filled with gold at the cost of the poor who had a rightful claim to it ; at the cost, too, of the reputation of the priest, which had already been sharply attacked by the imputation of money-getting.

Sometimes, nevertheless, he tries to preserve his reputation untarnished ; he speaks unceasingly of his narrow

means, and his embarrassments ; he is poorly clad, and daily reduces the expenses of his table, and of his furniture ; in short, he tries to pass for one who has no more than is strictly necessary. Death comes and strikes the fatal blow, the eyes are closed, and the coffers are opened. His wondering heirs are overjoyed, and religion weeps at the scandal of her minister !

O avarice ! base and vile passion, despised by all the world, but thrice infamous when a priest is guilty of it !

Dear and beloved brethren, hold this vice in abhorrence. Judas, you know, suffered it to dwell in his heart ; but even he found it so abominable that he cast away, before his suicide, that miserable money which had been the cause of his ruin.

Let us probe our hearts thoroughly. Do we love money ? Do we feel great pleasure when we receive it ? Do we feel painfully saddened when we pay it away ? Have we a certain sum laid by, and do we add to it day by day ? Do we acknowledge to ourselves this love for gold ? Oh that we may be able to give to these questions the answers which would be certainly given by holy priests !

72. Let us, then, be disinterested, if we would honor our ministry, and render it fruitful. Let us visit the poor often and cordially, and always leave some token of our visit in their retreats. Let us place ourselves at the head of all good works, and not limit ourselves to dilating upon the importance of charity. When grave and imperious circumstances arise, let us know how to submit to privations and sacrifices. If we are without money, then let us not be afraid to deprive ourselves of a garment. Let us not refuse to extricate, if we can do so without imprudence, any unfortunate fellow who needs temporary assistance, and who perchance, if we do not help him, will fall into deep misery, or give way to despair. Let us even spare him the pain of asking, and be the first to offer him that which he desires.

Never let us buy up houses and lands, and let us avoid employing in the decoration of our houses the money on which our poor and our church have the first claim. Let our furniture be simple and modest, not rich and costly. Let us think far more of decorating the house of God than our own, remembering that to act thus is to deprive ourselves for Christ. Let us not too easily persuade ourselves that the smallness of our means or the niggardliness of our flock will excuse us for leaving our church bare or dirty. Rather let us be quite sure that the church of a holy priest, poor as he may happen to be, is always clean, and decently adorned.

If any sum of money is due to us, let us be very particular not to claim it with too great harshness or severity. Let us ask for it, yet kindly, with reserve, and even with a sort of shrinking, showing that we take such a step reluctantly, and that it is more sweet to us to give than to receive. Let us always carry some small change to give to beggars whom we may meet; and if we are in company with laymen, let us not leave to them the whole honor of alms-giving. Prodigality must be banished from our table, as well as excessive parsimony; let us practise hospitality, and practise it without grudging.

In a word, we must be detached, wholly detached, from all worldly interests, our hearts fixed upon God, and God alone, following in this important matter the injunction of the great Apostle: *Quæ sursum sunt quærite, quæ sursum sunt sapite, non quæ super terram.*

73. Before ending this chapter we may be allowed one remark, suggested by some of our brethren, and of which we recognize the great importance.

If we stigmatize strongly the vice of avarice in a priest, it must not be supposed that we would praise extravagance. Both are grave faults deserving of severe reprobation.

Extravagance, if its inspirations are followed, suggests the wish for some new purchase every day. The avowed

enemy of order and rule, it does not permit an exact account of the obligations incurred, of the money borrowed, or of the daily necessary household expenses. As these different expenses are never balanced with the resources intended to meet them, the thought of the failure of means, which is every day drawing nearer, is constantly kept at a distance ; while, with foolish presumption, and wishing to satisfy the need which presses it to dissipate an income far more moderate than it appears it invents fresh expenses every moment.

At one time it arouses the desire of purchasing books more curious than useful, which we soon repent having bought on the faith of enticing and deceitful prospectuses.

At another time it flatters the fancy for antiquities, and leads a priest on by stealth to furnish, or rather encumber, the parsonage with a mass of useless furniture, which has no other recommendation than that of making him pay an excessive price for the advantage of their excessive age.

At other times, extravagance leads men to undertake journeys for mere fancy, without any prospect of advantage ; journeys which, even for the most economical, involve expenses beyond those they had calculated upon.

Often, too, it leaves no stone unturned to show the necessity of giving parties to the neighboring clergy ; and when we begin to listen, it pushes on, and persuades us that these small parties must be regular feasts, without our thinking of the expense which such feasts involve.

Under other circumstances, it represents under a smiling aspect the seductive idea of some speculation, which is always sure to have, according to its deceitful hopes, immensely advantageous results. For instance, it is some industrial enterprise, whose success, according to the prospectus, is quite sure, provided shareholders, that is to say dupes, can be procured.

The mania of building is, again, one of the sad ways in which extravagance employs itself, and which often ends in terrible ruin.

Farming speculations, again, have for some an irresistible attraction; high farming smiles upon them, and the same spirit of extravagance persuades them that the earth is never ungrateful, but repays a hundred-fold the care bestowed upon it, without taking account of the chapter of accidents which disappoint even the most skillful, and without troubling itself whether he whom it engages in these undertakings, which, moreover, are repugnant to the sacred occupations of his divine ministry, really possesses the knowledge requisite for this kind of industry.

Nepotism, again, advancement of one's family, and the sacrifices necessitated by such advancement, become for some priests the source of many mortifications, and often of troubles of conscience, not always without foundation.

There are some persons, again, whom extravagance leads to distress by ways so secret that they are not easily discovered; persons who abstain from really grave imprudences, such as are at once obvious, but who, exercising no watchfulness, indulging in every trifling thing that they wish for, never reckoning with themselves, or keeping any account of receipts and expenses, waste their little income, and run into debts which they have the greatest difficulty in paying, and which are often paid only by incurring fresh ones.

In fine, extravagance, which assumes every shape, even that of zeal and piety, inspires the idea of undertaking great works, good in themselves, but far too expensive for the priest who undertakes them without thinking of that rule of prudence taught in the very Gospel that he preaches: *Quis ex vobis, volens turrem ædificare, non prius sedens computat sumptus qui necessarii sunt, si habeat ad perficiendum.*

From all this, and from many other things which it is useless to speak of in greater detail, what results but the ruin of the extravagant priest, and, as the ordinary result of this ruin, debts unpaid, money borrowed and not returned, bills and obligations not discharged—in fact, all the consequences of a financial disorder in a greater or less degree? And that to the prejudice of many persons in whom the title of priest inspired confidence, and who, afterwards, are but the more ready to complain of him, who, less than all others, ought to have occasioned them the losses they suffer.

It is necessary to add that the works of zeal perish at once in the gulf hewn out by this excessive extravagance.

Therefore, war to avarice! But war also to extravagance and wastefulness! We must know how to steer between these two rocks, if we would reach the haven happily; and our bark will reach it without fail, if we take prudence for our pilot, and charity for our compass.

CHAPTER VIII.

ECCLESIASTICAL LEARNING CONSIDERED AS THE INSTRUMENT AND ALIMENT OF ZEAL.

74. LEARNING is a gift of God. Man receives this gift for his own advantage and for that of his fellow-men.

We are taught by the Gospel the penalty of burying the talent we have received, and of leaving it unproductive through negligence and sloth.

To employ this talent, but to employ it to the detriment of God's glory and to the ruin of souls, is a flagrant sin, which Divine vengeance is sure to overtake.

To engage in a profession which supposes and de-

mands learning, without possessing that learning in a degree sufficient to avoid compromising the spiritual or temporal interests of those who have recourse to us, is so grave a fault, that in certain cases it obliges to restitution, while sometimes the Divine law even requires that those engaged in such professions without sufficient learning should cease from exercising them, if they either cannot or will not acquire that knowledge which is requisite for the due discharge of their functions.

Now, if every man, whatever his profession, is bound to procure by his learning the glory of God, and to turn it to the advantage of his fellow-men, is it not evident that the priest more than all other men is rigorously bound by these obligations?

If a judge, a barrister, a physician, or any other public functionaries, called by God to exercise their professions, instead of spending their time in gaining the knowledge necessary for them, waste and fritter it away in trifles, or useless amusement, and therefore become incapable of performing their duties fitly, it is an evil, no doubt, and a great evil; but still, the harm occasioned to those who should give them their confidence would be, at the worst, but a temporal damage; they might, perhaps, ruin themselves and others, through their ignorance, but the ignorant priest will bring them, as well as himself, to damnation!

Is it I who hold this language? No! I do but echo the words of a great Master; and who is that Master? It is He Who first pronounced these words which we so often read but seldom apply specially to ourselves: *Cæcus si cæco ducatum præstet ambo in foveam cadunt.* Let us consider those last words attentively; they are terrible, but they are salutary. *Ambo in foveam cadunt!* You see ignorance blinds us; other blind men, whom it is our duty to enlighten, come to us asking our services; and the services we render them is to fall with them into the abyss of hell: *Ambo in foveam cadunt.*

75. Let us now bring out more clearly still the necessity of learning, in considering the need a priest has of it, that he may answer the expectations of those whose teacher he is.

If it were possible to establish some analogy between the benefits of the moral and of the material order, we would compare the priest, generally speaking, and more especially the parish priest, to those public fountains, which pour forth incessantly their wholesome water for all the inhabitants of the village or of the city. Do you see how every one comes to draw, according to his want, that salutary stream with which the precious fountain has been for centuries filled by a bountiful providence through a thousand unseen channels?

Thitherwards the crowd of every age and sex is continually moving; and the life which circulates through the veins of each inhabitant is preserved and developed by that inexhaustible fountain.

So is the priest in the moral order! he, too, in the centre of the village, or of the city, is constantly at the disposal of the spiritual family which God has committed to his care; he belongs to all, and gives himself to all with an inexhaustible abundance. If he is what he ought to be, he satisfies all the moral wants of the inhabitants of the parish; his parishioners come to him to restore their souls, as they go to the fountain to restore their bodies. Rich and poor, young and old, ignorant and learned, all come to this public man, to this fountain of grace, the waters of which spring up to eternal life. He instructs this one, he gently reprimands another, he consoles the afflicted, helps the poor, converts the sinner, rekindles the lukewarm, and stimulates the just; he multiplies himself to multiply his good work. And, ever inspired with his learning and his virtue, he pours by imperceptible channels into the souls of others that Divine life of which he himself is the fountain.

But let us return particularly to the consideration of

learning, as a means absolutely necessary to the priest for the fulfilment of the high functions of his ministry.

76. First. How is a priest to preach, if deficient in learning? What is a preacher but a public instructor, standing before the multitude gathered to hear his voice, and too often inclined to judge him severely, to censure him maliciously, should his ignorance give a handle for criticism?

All agree upon this point : that in order to instruct a congregation or a parish, nothing is more important than to explain in a complete course the whole Christian doctrine (the creeds, the decalogue, the sacraments, and prayers), and it is very important that this scheme of dogmatic and moral instruction should be carried out with perfect exactness of doctrine, and, at the same time, with that clearness of which we have instance in the *Doctrine Chrétienne* of Lhomond, in the *Petits Sermons*, and the admirable *Catéchisme* of Bellarmine.

Now, when we reflect upon the talent of teaching, we are very soon convinced that the clearest, the most solid, and familiar instruction is the produce of an exact and deep knowledge of the subject. To teach with clearness, one must be thoroughly in possession of one's matter. He who has sounded its depths thoroughly, and has compared together all its parts, he it is who explains and handles it as he will ; he raises it, lowers it, extends or abridges it; he draws from it milk for the children and more solid food for the grown men. When we would be familiar, simple, popular, it is necessary to master the subject, not to be mastered by it ; we must know how to select what suits our hearers, and to omit what does not suit them. Such a task can be fulfilled by none but a soundly instructed priest : *Similis est patrifamilias qui profert de thesauro suo nova et vetera.*

There is, no doubt, a large number of preachers, sufficiently learned to preach usefully ; but if they were not animated by the spirit of piety, if they yielded to dissi-

pation, if they were vanquished by sloth, if the love of excursions and travelling overcame them, if frivolous occupations and nights of cards drew them from their important works and serious studies, what would be the result? Alas! it is but too easy to guess. In spite of their natural talent, they would suffer all the disadvantages of ignorance. Trusting to a sort of facility which is anything but learning, they would come like so many ignorant men, to utter a string of unconnected phrases which would teach their hearers nothing; perhaps, even, they would mount the pulpit to utter sententiously grave errors in dogma, and statements in morals either too relaxed or too strict, likely to mislead men's consciences, and to be productive of frightful results, the responsibility of which would rest with all its weight on him who had neglected to instruct himself, and had made himself a teacher at the risk of being called teacher without teaching.

77. And the catechist, how will he instruct the children if he is himself without instruction? Will not this old saying, *Nemo dat quod non habet*, be cast in his teeth as a bitter reproach? It is not generally known how deep and exact an acquaintance with the principles of religion is required for inculcating clear and precise ideas into children's minds. If a person has not that exact knowledge, he will confine himself to generalities which teach nothing, or at least very little; he will avoid precise and well-defined points of doctrine, feeling his weakness, and fearing to make a false step. On other occasions, he will enter into explanations which explain nothing; and if he contrives to instil anything into the minds of his young hearers, it will not be light, but obscurity, uncertainty, and that incoherence of ideas with which he himself is full.

Ignorance in a catechist is productive of another very deplorable effect: not only is he without the knowledge of several points of doctrine, but that ignorance prevents

him from teaching properly even that which he does know. The method of teaching contributes powerfully to the instruction of pupils: a sound method established by experience; the spirit of emulation; discussions in the form of controversies between the more advanced pupils; edifying anecdotes bearing upon the explanations given, and many other resources which the catechist employs when he is assisted by learning—all these are nothing to an ignorant catechist. He dreads to approach that which he fears with reason he is unable to explain; if he ventures to touch upon such points, he does so timidly, awkwardly, and in a manner likely to cause weariness, disgust, perhaps even the ridicule of the mischievous little folk around him.

78. But what shall we say, then, of the confessor, and of the necessity of learning for the exercise of his Divine ministry?

The preacher says what he likes to his hearers, without fearing interruptions, objections, questions, or discussions, etc.

The catechist, surrounded only by little children, more inclined to laugh and play than to instruct themselves seriously, and who receive, without any remarks, the bread of doctrine, just as he offers it to them; the catechist, if he feels his weakness on any point, may dispense with the difficulties that he is unable to solve; or he can, at least, postpone the solution of those difficulties till he has consulted some friend or some book, without his young flock perceiving his perplexity.

But can the ignorant confessor have a moment's ease when sitting in his tribunal? What is he when on that burning ground, where are decided every hour the eternal destinies of surrounding penitents?

He is a master giving to those who approach him, no longer general instructions, as are given from the pulpit, the common property of all, but special instructions, appropriate to the spiritual wants of each in particular;

instructions of infinite variety, inasmuch as there are not two consciences alike, and all have their own peculiar wants, which the confessor must supply; instructions, too, which cannot be postponed, since he who requires them needs instruction without delay, and may never be seen again; in fact, instructions presenting sometimes such difficulties that the most learned confessors tremble in giving them, even after having consulted some learned brethren.

What, again, is this ignorant confessor when he has installed himself in the tribunal of penance? He is the physician of souls. Poor souls! Sin has mortally wounded them; the habit of their sin has bound them, strangled them, filled them with sores, stricken them with complete insensibility. The confessor is the physician charged to heal them; but for this he must know the nature of the disease, the cause from which it springs, and its fitting remedies; he must, says the Holy Ghost, *discern between blood and blood, between cause and cause, between leprosy and leprosy.*

What mischief does not an ignorant confessor cause, as spiritual physician! He looses when he ought to bind, and binds when he ought to loose; he gives light when light should be withheld, and continues blindness when it should be driven away; he questions without prudence or discernment, at the risk of imparting a knowledge of evil to those who are ignorant of it; he even gives scandal, without any bad intention, by the awkwardness of his expressions, and the minute details into which he enters without tact or judgment; he treats alike those who have habits of sin and those who have not; he does not know what constitutes proximate occasions, and, consequently, makes a thousand blunders in this delicate and important matter; he understands nothing of the obligations of different ranks, of the impediments to marriage, of the various and intricate difficulties in questions of restitution, nor indeed of moral theology at

all, of which he knew but little before he left the seminary, and knows still less now. In one word, he is a blind leader of the blind, and falls with them into the same ditch.

Yet if he knew enough to doubt! his doubts would induce to seek for enlightenment; but if he does not perceive his own ignorance, or if, which we do not wish to suppose possible, pride suggests to him to consult no one else, but to trust to himself for the solution of the difficulties which he encounters, who can tell the consequences of such imprudence?

It is indeed terrible to think of all the knowledge necessary for sitting in the sacred tribunal as master, as physician, as judge; and to consider, on the other hand, the imperturbable boldness with which a priest so deficient in knowledge thrusts himself into the exercise of an art so difficult, and so justly called *the art of arts* not only on account of its importance, but also on account of the numberless difficulties wherewith it is surrounded; *ars artium regimen animorum*.

Weighing these grave considerations, theologians teach us positively that a priest who has not sufficient knowledge cannot, without very grave sin, or, as some say, cannot without crime, undertake the charge of confessor.

And we must not forget that the reproach of endangering by mistakes the salvation of souls, is not addressed to those priests only who are utterly ignorant of their duties. There are others who, without the slightest suspicion of it, deserve similar blame only too truly. These are such as have, it is true, a natural aptitude sufficient, or even more than sufficient; who have talents even above the average; whom no one suspects of ignorance; who enjoy commonly the reputation of being clever men; who once knew their dogmatic and moral theology pretty well; but who, from idleness, from dissipation, from the love of play or of good cheer, from disgust at study, or from some other cause, have left off working,

and put aside, in some corner or other of their libraries, their theological authors, where they have lain in peace since the day they quitted the seminary.

Strong in the favorable opinion they entertain of their real or supposed talent, they create a system for themselves, and follow it invariably, believing that they still know what they are really ignorant of.

What inducements, then, are here to study, and to constant study! What inducements to strengthen our learning, to enlarge its circle, or, at least, to maintain and preserve it from the abyss of forgetfulness into which it must inevitably fall, unless continually cultivated and renewed by study.

79. Besides, it is not merely for the becoming discharge of his high functions, his official functions, that the priest has need of learning, if he wishes to render his ministry fruitful and honorable. See what a glory shines on the Church, in general, from the learning of her priests! Who can tell the renown she has gained from that treasure of sublime doctrine which, by a visible design of Providence, has shone forth in all times, in the persons of those famous doctors, equally renowned for their learning as for their virtues! What a majestic sight, to contemplate them standing here and there on the track of ages, like so many lofty beacons lighting mankind, and directing their steps heavenward, through the darkness of ignorance, the errors of a false philosophy, and the passions of licentiousness!

Doubtless, we cannot hope to possess the learning of an Origen, a Jerome, an Augustine, a Thomas Aquinas, a Bossuet, among many others, whose fame will last while the world stands; but if God has broken the mould wherein He cast such great men, He has not, therefore, refused to be glorified by the learning of ordinary priests.

Our mission is more restricted; but, in its sphere, it is, and ought to be, equally fruitful. Those learned doctors had, for their mission, to enlighten, to sanctify,

to govern the present and future moral world ; and we, in our turn, are sent to enlighten, to sanctify, and to govern a parish, a district, perhaps a diocese ; and if we develop our learning, every day, especially if we accompany and guide that work by a solid, fervent, and enlightened piety, will not this learning contribute greatly to increase the fruits of our divine ministry ?

What authority does learning give a holy priest over sceptics, and the enemies of religion ! How triumphant is the unbeliever when he has got the better of a poor ignorant priest, who possesses the faith, without the capacity to defend it ! But how small and quiet is that same unbeliever when faced by a learned priest, who, in a few words, annihilates his arguments, and shows him that true learning, far from ever opposing faith, often becomes its most striking confirmation. (See the lectures of his Eminence Cardinal Wiseman, on *The Connection between Science and Revealed Religion*.)

If this unbeliever be not converted when brought face to face with learning, he is at least silenced, and this silence is a defeat to him, as it is the glory of the priest, or rather of the religion whose minister he is.

One day a learned and eloquent preacher of the Society of Jesus (dead a few years ago) was unfolding the proofs of the divinity of our religion in the presence of a large congregation. The unbelievers of the place, attracted by the charm of his eloquence, had flocked to the church to hear the sermon of that celebrated preacher. Their chief, their leader, was there, as if to discipline his forces. He was listening attentively, and carefully following the thread of the close arguments of the preacher, when, overpowered by the force of the proofs, and the power of truth, he suddenly rose, and turning towards his companions in unbelief, exclaimed aloud : " Answer that if you can." The sermon ended, he ran and threw himself at the feet of a priest, made his confession, and was wonderfully converted.

Grace no doubt enlightened, moved, drew that sinner, we admit; but grace worked through learning, or rather, what was learning itself but a grace imparted to that preacher by God, for the salvation of his unbelieving brethren? What a glorious victory for religion is a success of such importance!

80. We will not forget to mention in this place the immense service that a learned priest renders every instant, by his exhortations in common life, and by his good advice in the difficult situations in which a great many persons so often find themselves. What confidence he inspires on account of the learning which he is known to possess! What eagerness there is to consult him in troubles of conscience, in embarrassments of business, in family difficulties, in the doubts or perplexities respecting vocation, and in a thousand other circumstances, where men are glad of the opportunity of finding guidance and advice in the learning of a holy priest!

What an advantage also for the pious faithful to have it in their power to oppose such a pastor to the enemies of religion when they are not strong enough to repulse them themselves! Either the unbelievers accept the challenge or decline it; if they accept it, it is an immense advantage for them, from which their conversion may result, as has been the case with so many others; if they decline it, by this refusal they give weapons for their own defeat, because people do not fail to observe, that if they were as strongly convinced as they seem to be of the force of their arguments, they would not fear to produce them when facing the man who holds them in contempt.

81. Now that we have considered learning as an instrument of zeal for the salvation of souls, *ut sit homo Dei ad omne opus bonum instructus*, let us show briefly that it is also the aliment of the priest's zeal for his individual perfection, *ut perfectus sit homo Dei*.

"Be always piously occupied," says a holy person,

“or the devil will find you employment.” Idleness, we know it, alas! by the sad sights we witness every day, idleness is the root of all evil, and we could not have any doubt about it, even if the Holy Spirit had not said, *Multam malitiam docuit otiositas*. The horrible crimes and frightful chastisements of Sodom, what was their origin? *Hæc fuit iniquitas Sodomæ, otium illius*. Have not even the greatest among men been vanquished by that deceitful enemy? Consider David, Samson, Solomon and others; “they were saints in doing,” says St. Augustine, “and idleness ruined them.” *In occupationibus sancti, in otio perierunt*.

If any one seriously investigates this, he is sure to find, almost without exception, that a decay of piety, deadness of zeal, the desire of putting one's self forward, temptations feebly resisted, little offences at first, afterwards great offences bringing dishonor to the priesthood, have their first source in the distaste for study, and in that cowardly idleness which has made, and still makes, so many victims.

On the other hand, any one who considers with equal attention will certainly see that a studious priest, and especially if he studies ecclesiastical learning, will very rarely, or rather will never, afford cause of scandal.

Such a priest may be reproached for not nourishing his learning by a more fervent piety; he may require to be reminded that science puffs up when it is not united to charity, which edifies; he may be liable to be told that study ought not to hinder the works of zeal, but, on the contrary, should help and regulate its ardor; but we repeat, such a priest will never deserve the reproach of being seriously irregular in his conduct, far less guilty of those terrible scandals that would be the ruin of religion, did not God maintain it with His mighty arm. “*Ama scripturas*,” said St. Jerome, “*et carnis vitia non amabis*.” That is, because study, especially study of the holy Scriptures, is a source of pure pleasures,

which give a distaste for the shameful pleasures of the senses.

Far more to one who can reflect seriously it will appear that the habitual study of ecclesiastical learning is a principal source of strictness of life in the clergy, and the chief means of nourishing the ecclesiastical spirit. In fact, is it possible that during all the time of his ministry a priest should diligently apply himself to acquire the learning proper to his office, without possessing and maintaining in that love for grave studies a spirit of earnestness, pure morals, noble and lofty ideas, convictions, feelings, and habits becoming his high profession?

Further, let us consult experience, and direct our attention to what passes in the Church. Holy priests love study, and devote themselves to it as much as they can. Bad priests hate it, and study only when they cannot possibly avoid it. All the others love it more or less, according as they approach more nearly to the holy or to the bad priests. The priest's virtue may therefore be measured by his study, and the learning which is its fruit, both of which contribute alike to his own holiness, and to the salvation of his brethren.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SAME SUBJECT.

82. PERHAPS some of our pious readers, convinced by our arguments of the necessity of learning and study, will ask : What shall we study, and to what end shall we study, and how, in order to render our ministry fruitful, and to make our learning an instrument of zeal, and of salvation for our people and for ourselves? We will endeavor to answer these pious inquiries.

And first, What shall we study?

There are two very different kinds of learning; ecclesiastical learning, with which we are now principally occupied, and profane learning. Ecclesiastical learning comprises the knowledge of the holy Scriptures, of dogmatic, moral, and mystical Theology, of the holy Fathers, of our great Preachers, of ecclesiastical history, and especially of the more edifying portion of that history—that is to say, the biography of those saints who have been most distinguished for their wisdom and the activity of their zeal.*

Were we not more especially addressing in this work the priests employed in the ordinary ministry, who, on account of their many occupations, can often study no more than is absolutely necessary, we would add to the branches of ecclesiastical learning already mentioned, the study of the Canon law, the discipline of the Church, and Hebrew. Those priests who belong to societies in which the higher branches of learning are cultivated, as well as those who, from ill health or any other reason, have no parochial charge, will do well, if God has blessed them with talents above the average, not to neglect the twofold study which we have just suggested. It would be sad, and almost disgraceful for the clerical body, if the Church did not number in her bosom learned priests to preserve the knowledge of her traditions and rules of discipline; just as it would be a humiliation for ourselves that the sacred language which ought to be dear to us on so many accounts should be cultivated by laics, and neglected by priests.

This then is ecclesiastical learning, the best of all learning incontestably: this is the learning, and the proper learning for the priest. Unhappy he who would set it

* The *Vie des Saints*, by Godescard (12 vols.), is an excellent work of this kind; the holy Bishop of Amiens, Mgr. de la Motte, used to read this work through every year. A priest might at least peruse the more developed lives, and principally those of the apostolic men who have appeared in every age.

on one side, that he might devote himself to profane studies. He ceases to be a priest on this point, he goes out of his own element to enter another which will not only fail to quicken his soul, but will perhaps parch and kill it; he acts as a lawyer would who, without giving up his profession, should desert the study of law to apply himself solely to medicine. Such conduct is opposed to all order, and is an habitual violation of the will of God Who forbids him that which he engages in, and commands that which he neglects.

Before all, then, a priest ought to study, to study constantly and deeply, ecclesiastical learning, which he will never know too well; the more he studies, the more he will be a priest, if we may so speak. This learning, if pursued with the disposition we are about to recommend, will elevate his ideas, purify his thoughts and affections, and will develop and fertilize the resources of his zeal at the same time that it will direct its employment.

Then, strongly attached to the truths of the faith, he will be able, as St. Paul says, to exhort according to sound doctrine, and to convince the gainsayers: "*Amplectentem . . . fidelem sermonem ut potens sit exhortari in doctrina sana, et eos qui contradicunt arguere.*" Then he will see distinctly, by himself, and in himself, how true are those words of the great apostle, that the Scripture, divinely inspired, is useful for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for leading men to piety and to righteousness, and for making the man of God perfect, and furnished to all good works: *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei et ad omne opus bonum instructus.*

83. Therefore, we repeat, a priest ought to apply himself, far more than to any other study, to the acquisition of ecclesiastical learning. And besides, a wise pastor should study the best works upon the good spiritual government, and the temporal administration of parishes, their laws, and the statutes concerning the property of

the church. But must he abandon profane learning entirely, or is it not well that he should not be entirely unacquainted with it?

We own at once, that when we consider the time which the labors of the holy ministry require, where men devote themselves to it as they ought to do; the time absorbed by the works of zeal, when embraced with a holy eagerness; the time requisite for spiritual exercises, so indispensable for nourishing the spirit of piety; the time employed in the preparation of sermons, and catechizing; and lastly, the time spent in necessary visits, we think that few hours will remain for the study of theology, and there will be left no time, or at least exceedingly little, for profane studies.

But if all that we have said be perfectly followed out, if the study of theology has its place, and a large place, before everything else, and there yet remains each day or each week a little spare time, we do not see any objection, but rather an advantage, in studying certain branches of profane learning, not indeed to their fullest extent, but sufficiently to enable us to speak on them with interest to ourselves and others when opportunity offers.

Thus, a priest may study the history of his native country and some compendium of universal history; he may pursue with moderation the study of natural science; he may take pleasure in looking through some works on archæology, that science so much in fashion now, and which ought perhaps be more familiar to us than to the men of the world, because it is specially on our ground that they come to practise and to perfect their studies. The immense field of literature may be also examined with advantage, provided we always guard against withering and chilling our souls by reading certain passages which, if not obscene, are at least trifling and light, and offering far too great a contrast to the austere gravity which should mark the relaxation of a priest.

Further, a priest who is animated by true zeal sets

before himself a higher end, and some useful purpose, when he employs his leisure hours in enlarging his stock of literary knowledge. He hopes, as opportunity offers, to have recourse to it with advantage to his ministry; for instance, to have a common ground with men who are indifferent, or even hostile, to religion; to win the consideration, and by that means the confidence, of certain of the laity, who disdain the society of priests on account of prejudices which they have imbibed from the ignorance of some ecclesiastics.

84. Now let us see the end that we should propose to ourselves in our studies.

The first thought inspired by this question, if we are animated by the spirit of piety, is that we should study solely with a view to procure the greater glory of God, to make the salvation of our own souls more sure, and to work more usefully for the salvation of our brethren. Our study is unprofitable for salvation, to say no more, when we study without proposing to ourselves, at least indirectly, that noble end.

This one principle shows how blamable we should be if we studied mechanically, without any end—or for mere vanity—or merely to satisfy a frivolous curiosity—or from obstinate pursuit and maintenance of certain systems, which party spirit is fond of propagating, without the slightest advantage—or for the mere pleasure of reading or composing light and trifling books which often absorb a considerable time.

No; such study, animated by such intentions, will never merit the blessing of God. Could He approve that which offends Him? Could He bless that which He condemns?

Let us, then, return to our starting point, and make a firm resolution never to apply our minds to anything, no matter what it may be, unless we can be sure that the glory of God, the salvation of our fellow-men, and our own sanctification, will result from our study.

85. St. Charles Borromeo, Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, has left us a magnificent example of the love of study, and of the purity of intention with which it should be followed. That man of God, consumed unceasingly by holy zeal, in the midst of occupations of all kinds the weight of which almost overwhelmed him, was yet able to find time to study, with wonderful application, the Holy Scriptures, theology, the Holy Fathers, ecclesiastical history, and even philosophy. We are astonished at the sight of the great number of pastoral letters, so full of wisdom, that he has left us, with those admirable decrees, for the reformation of the clergy, so full of fruits of salvation, and the work entitled *Sylva Pastoralis*, a collection which he had composed for the use of the clergy from scripture and the Fathers.

Did he in the midst of those immense labors forget to turn them to the glory of God, the triumph of the Church, and the sanctification of souls? Let us judge by this reflection of one of his biographers :* “The great aim of St. Charles,” said he, “was not to become a scholar, but to learn the means of governing his Church holily, and of benefiting his fellow-creatures. It is easy to observe that he used all his learning only to introduce a complete reform among the clergy and his flock.”

86. In what manner must we apply ourselves to study, that God may bless it, and that it may produce fruit ; or, in other words, how must we study ?

If we are fully convinced by the preceding arguments of the necessity of studying only with an eye to the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, we must be convinced, at the same time, of the importance of sanctifying our study. In fact, we have seen that knowledge is only an instrument, a powerful instrument of zeal which God places in the hand of the evangelical laborers employed to cultivate His vineyard ; but it is God alone Who is

* P. Juissano of the congregation of the Oblates.

the great mover, without Whom the instrument is useless and the laborers cannot work, or, at least, cannot work effectively : *Nisi dominus ædificaverit domum in vanum laboraverunt qui ædificant eam.*

We gather treasures of learning in vain if charity does not burn within us ; if the spirit of piety does not fertilize our works, if we labor without the holy disposition which brings upon us the help of God, we are nothing but inflated bladders and tinkling cymbals ; we strike the ear, but leave the heart cold ; we gain applause, perhaps, but we never bring to Jesus Christ the sinners who applaud ; we are admired as learned men, but we are not blessed as priests who save souls.

It is not then enough to study, nor even to study what we ought to study. It is a great thing, no doubt, but it is not enough ; we must study usefully ; that is to say, piously, methodically, courageously, soberly, and humbly.

87. We must study *piously*, offering our work to God, renouncing, to please Him, all bad or imperfect designs, imploring light and grace, and declaring to Him that we have no other design in our study but His glory and the salvation of souls. These different sentiments ought to be offered Him with a loving outpouring of our hearts, before writing a single letter, or reading a single line. One can hardly imagine with what facility, with what holy ardor we work, and what blessings we draw on our study when we unite our inmost heart to our divine Saviour before beginning, and when, like St. Augustine, we seek Him only in our reading : *Jesum quærens in libris.*

88. We must study *methodically*. "God is order," says St. Thomas : *Deus est ordo.* Yes, God is essentially order, method, and wisdom ; and consequently averse to anything which is disorder, irregularity, and confusion : *Non in commotione Dominus.* It is therefore necessary to observe an exact method in our studies ; it is necessary

not only in order to please God, but also because, looking at the matter merely from a rational and human point of view, it is only methodical reading which is generally crowned with success.

There are many ecclesiastics who give a great deal of time to study, but as they do not observe any method, their own fancy or the whim of the moment determines them on commencing one subject to-day, and to-morrow another ; or they are led to begin a book at the last chapter, to undertake a work which they soon think no more of, and most often never finish. Such actions are not under the influence of the Spirit of God ; and one might ask if such study be study at all.

To remedy this disorder, let us examine seriously, and before God, what is most important for us to learn ; what will procure most abundantly the glory of God, and the salvation of souls ; and after this examination, let us apply ourselves to this study in a regular and orderly manner, and let us absolutely reject all suggestions, whatever they may be, which would induce us to quit that study for a new one, unless such a change should become unavoidably necessary.

Method, when accepted as a guide, will also fix the hours of study so far, be it well remembered, as the exigencies of our ministry will allow. If, when we are at liberty to study almost every day up to a certain hour, we do not choose to apply to study, order will be at an end, there will be no longer constant and regular zeal for study, and our work will necessarily suffer from this want of fixedness of purpose.

Method requires moreover that a man should not study merely for the sake of study ; or read merely for reading's sake, or write for writing, like invalids ordered by the doctor to take exercise, who walk on without wishing to go to one place more than another. We must study for our improvement, and for an increase of usefulness by proficiency in learning. Study must be turned to

account, and so we strongly advise the student to take notes of all that he reads, and to enter in a book kept for the purpose, in alphabetical order, a summary of all that he finds most useful in his reading, with an index to enable him to find the passage again when he may wish to do so.

89. We must study *courageously*; that is to say, not be discouraged at difficulties, but have recourse at once to God; following the example of St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, and many others, who have confessed that they found at the foot of their crucifix more courage to surmount difficulties, and more light to dispel their doubts, than in the works of the most learned writers.

What shame for all of us, who set before ourselves an end so high and so noble, and who are further assisted with so many graces, encouraged by so many beautiful examples, if we should shrink as cowards before an obstacle that the glory of God, as well as the salvation of souls, bid us to overthrow, when even the pagans themselves, by the help of their reason alone, withstood the obstacles which they met in their profane studies, and laid down the axiom that obstinate labor overcomes all difficulties: *Labor improbus omnia vincit*.

90. We must study *soberly*, and never lose sight of this saying of St. Paul: "*Oportet sapere, sed sapere ad sobrietatem*." There are some men, not a great number, who have such a passion for study, that all other work is insufferable to them; this passion is with them an abyss which swallows up piety, works of zeal, and even the common duties of their ministry. If there is a new book advertised, they must have it. Whatever may be the subject of works puffed in a clever advertisement, so soon as they hope to learn anything from them, they purchase them, and read them at once. No cost is too great to satisfy their immoderate desire of acquiring new information. Clearly such excess is not according

to God ; it must produce much confusion, disorder, barrenness, and dissipation in the mind, and that sort of *indigesta moles*, which is more dangerous than profitable to sound knowledge.

“Learned persons,” said Fenelon, “occupied with grave subjects, have but little curiosity : what they know gives them contempt for many things which they do not know ; they perceive the uselessness and the absurdity of most things which men of little ability, who are ignorant and unoccupied, are very anxious to learn.” On all the chief branches of ecclesiastical learning, procure a few first-rate books, standard works, so to say, and read them again and again, whilst others are engaged in running over a great number.

How large a portion of our spiritual exercises is sometimes omitted to satisfy this uncontrollable passion for study ! What works of zeal might be undertaken for the conversion of sinners during the time given to barren reading ! How many poor might be relieved with the money which is needed for the purchase of superfluous books ! How many sick, on the threshold of eternity, wait with impatience, perhaps even in vain, the visit of their learned pastor, who is so lost in his books that he forgets to bear them the last consolations which they need.

Let us, then, be well on our guard against allowing ourselves to be carried away by this passionate love for study. “Not to study,” says a pious author, “is to tempt God ; to do nothing but study is to forget one’s vocation.”

Learning ought never to absorb piety and good works ; it ought, on the contrary, to second and quicken them, by elevating the mind, guiding the feelings, and purifying the pursuits of him who devotes himself to it.

91. Finally, we must study *humbly*. Men who are truly learned, if their learning be guided by piety, are always remarkable for their exceeding humility. Nothing shows

less piety than the manners, the conversation, and the behavior of a proud scientific man. With him learning is everything, nor does he ever praise any man except for this.

Should any one talk in his presence of the virtue of a holy priest, who has but little talent, if any one praises his gentleness, his modesty, his zeal, his piety, our great man passes such commendations coldly by, and soon comes to the chapter of learning, on which subject he, by a few keen words and a sardonic smile, gives us to understand, that he whose piety has just been so much praised is nothing but a *minus habens*, as far as talent is concerned.

So, too, should any one venture to speak in the presence of this proud scholar of a venerable priest, not only a learned man himself, but who adds to his wisdom a true and tender piety, then he passes lightly over the piety, and dilates upon his learning, for which alone he seems to profess esteem and admiration.

It would be well for that enthusiastic and exclusive preacher of learning, to read and meditate upon those words, so simple, yet so true, and so thoroughly Christian in the *Imitatio Christi*: "Every man is naturally anxious to know; but what is knowledge without the fear of God? The humble peasant who serves God is far above the proud philosopher, who, neglecting himself, observes the course of the stars." And in another place: "Learning is not to be blamed; . . . for it is good in itself, and according to the order of God; only, *one should always prefer a pure conscience and a holy life.* . . . Truly, in the day of judgment we shall not be asked what we have read, but what we have done; not whether we have spoken eloquently, but whether we have lived rightly."

92. We deem it our duty, in finishing this important subject, to confute the principal objections urged against the necessity of learning and study.

First objection: *Piety supplies the want of learning.*

Who holds such language? Does holy Scripture, which proclaims that the priest's lips keep knowledge, and that the law is to be sought from his mouth : *Labia sacerdotis custodient scientiam et legem requirent de ore ejus?* Is it St. Paul who ceases not to recommend Timothy, his disciple, to apply all his faculties to reading, to meditating upon holy Scripture, and to teaching the faithful : *Attende lectioni et doctrinæ?*

Is it the holy Fathers who so often remind the priest of his obligation to study incessantly, in order to oppose error, instruct his people, and work more efficaciously for the salvation of souls?

Is it the theologians who all require as an indispensable condition for lawfully receiving holy orders, the possession not only of tried sanctity, *sanctitas probata*, but of sufficient learning, *scientia competens*, ever more perfect with each new order received? Is it these same theologians who, after pointing out that priests who have left the world to devote themselves exclusively to contemplative life, or who no longer exercise the active functions of the holy ministry, are not obliged to be as learned as others, take at once another tone with regard to priests engaged in the direction of souls and the instruction of a flock, and say positively that they must possess a stock of knowledge far more extensive than the others : *Multo majori opus est scientia?*

Lastly, is it the Church who requires by her councils that whoever does not possess sufficient learning shall be rejected as unworthy of the priesthood, and declares the want of this learning to be an irregularity, from which no authority can grant a dispensation?

Ah! could piety supply the place of learning, how would the directors of seminaries be spared most painful perplexities in being so often obliged to do violence to themselves in excluding from holy orders many young men, adorned by every virtue, animated by the best intentions, true models of piety, and deficient only in learning!

But it may be said by some priest devoid of talent, that the necessity of learning, the obligation imposed on the superiors of seminaries to make sure that candidates for holy orders possess it, the sin which would be committed in receiving them without sufficient knowledge—all that concerns the candidates, not priests afterwards : that is a question of vocation and nothing else. For myself, I do not study, it is true, but I pray, I confess, I catechize, I preach, I perform all the functions of the holy ministry, and I hope that these holy works will supply what is wanting in learning. You are wrong, dear brother, you are wrong. What ! that all we have said referred only to the candidates for orders ? But, in truth, is learning necessary to the seminarist only for his duties in the seminary, and not rather with a view to the sacred ministry, which as a priest he will have to fulfil ? But, after all, I have been ordained, I am a priest ; this is a proof that my ability has been thought sufficient. Yes ; sufficient then, but perhaps insufficient now. The Superior of the seminary, in presenting you to the Bishop, and the Bishop in ordaining you, have not given you a patent for knowledge which could not be lost ; you have perhaps, by hard work, furnished your mind with just the knowledge necessary for your admission into holy orders ; but the more deficient you were in learning, the more your superiors expected that you would do what lay in your power to increase it, or, at least, to preserve and maintain it by study.

Let us say it again : Piety does not supply the want of learning. And more, it is not even a true piety, a solid and enlightened piety, if it does not inspire its possessor with a decided taste for theological learning.

93. Second objection : *I cannot aspire to high scientific attainments ; I have not the capacity.* This is just what was said of the learned Suarez, when he begged the Jesuits to admit him into their talented society ; he was very nearly refused ; however, at last they did receive him,

and soon saw what a treasure they would have lost in rejecting him. Study, assisted by a deep and tender piety, developed his learning so wonderfully, that he was and is still considered one of the brightest lights of theology.

After all, if you cannot master the depths of theology, it is not the highest order of knowledge which is required of you. What is required, is simply that you should cultivate the feeble talent you have received, and that you should not, under the pretext of incapacity to rise to a higher degree, neglect to acquire by study ordinary and sufficient knowledge.

94. Third objection : *I know enough for my humble ministry.* But suppose you knew more, might you not extend the influence of your ministry ? If your sermons and instructions were better worked out, and better learned ; if your catechizing were better prepared, and more instructive ; if study, and the knowledge resulting from it, made your intercourse with your flock more interesting and more useful ; if, by carefully studying dogmatic, moral, and mystic theology, you could exercise with greater authority, certainty, and facility, with more zeal and success, the important ministry of confession ; if, lastly, by your habitual piety, recollection, and study, you should be generally known as a perfectly exemplary priest,—is it not evident that you would gain in a higher degree the confidence of your people, and that this confidence would increase the number of your penitents, and consequently widen your *humble ministry*, and perhaps induce your superior to entrust you with a more extended one ?

What strange blindness, productive of serious evil if it should increase, that a man, because he has charge only of a small parish, should neglect ecclesiastical learning, and lose, in travelling, in cards, in festivities, or a thousand other frivolities, that precious time that might be so profitably devoted to study !

This particular blindness is the scourge of small parishes. Many priests, having very few parishioners in their flock, do not know how to spend the time at their disposal ; this time hangs heavily on their hands ; there are no sick to visit ; none or but few penitents to confess ; what are they to do in those tedious days, succeeding one another with such tiresome monotony ?

What are you to do, dear brother ? Study, study dilligently. But you may say, I do not perceive the end, the result, the practical good of my work. What ! Is it not an end, is it not a precious result, to combat sloth, to edify your parishioners by a life spent in retirement and study, to inspire salutary remorse in your brethren who do not act thus, to cast out those temptations which rise up in the shade, and to ascend up to God on the two wings of piety and learning ?

Holy priests, even in the smallest of parishes, never find the hours weary ; their zeal always provides them some occupation ; the time that is not employed in the active duties of their ministry, is devoted to prayer and study, and their life glides on, happy, quiet, precious before God and men ; and they present themselves without fear at the feet of the Sovereign Judge ; and carry with them into eternity, no less than the pastors of populous parishes, *days full of good works : et dies pleni invenientur in eis.*

We were personally acquainted with the Curé of a very small country parish, whom God seemed to have raised up to show to all others placed in similar circumstances that a priest might have to govern a very small flock without being ever wearied or complaining of want of occupation. This worthy pastor had not three hundred sheep under his crook ; and his great virtue and high talents would have enabled him to govern a much larger parish ; but, not only had he not a spark of ambition, but he preferred the charge of these few souls, and conducting them as well as possible, to governing a

large number, which he might not have been able to direct according to the pious inspirations of his zeal.

His flock was almost singular in respect of regularity ; but we may also venture to say that it was from the very reflection of the pastor who governed it, for he, too, had very few imitators among his brother priests, and was almost singular in his kind.

His parish was governed like a well-regulated family, or like a community living under the laws of the most exact discipline. He knew each of his parishioners as well as he knew himself, and he used to bestow as much attention on the least of them, as if he had the care but of him alone. Piety flourished in that parish, and the great confidence inspired by the pastor gave him power enough to exact a thousand things that were not rigorously prescribed by the Divine law, but which he required and obtained in the name of that Christian perfection the rules of which he had the happiness to be able to follow and also to enforce.

As he had the whole flock submissive to his teaching, he had accustomed them to come to church morning and evening to assist at the prayers which he offered there publicly every day of the year. His sermons, his catechizings were always carefully prepared. His days were so occupied by spiritual exercises, study, frequent visits to his parishioners in order to carry them advice, comfort, encouragement, blessed words full of faith and of divine love, that he complained far less of their length than of their brevity.

So passed away the life of that man of God, until the day when, fearing that he was no longer able to feed his flock properly, he thought it his duty to part from it, in order that he might occupy himself with nothing but his own salvation, and prepare himself for the terrible passage into eternity.

Dear brethren, let us follow so beautiful an example ; and if we have but a small number of souls to care for,

let us do specially for each of them what we should have to do generally for a larger number. Many pastors deplore not being able to enter into a number of details for the good government of their parishes, on account of their great size ; let us do what they wish to do, since we have not the same hindrances. Let us take great care of each one of our sheep, since we have time to individualize our zeal. Three hundred children ! what a family would this be for a single father ! Well ! suppose (and in the spiritual sense it is no supposition) that we have charge of a family of two or three hundred members : let us attend to each one, as having some day to account before God for this precious charge. Let us do that, and certainly weariness will never come to parch our hearts and sadden our souls.

95. Fourth objection : *I have no time to study ; all my time is given up to the ministry.* An excellent lesson for the idle seminarist, who, abusing the rich talent that God has confided to him, or neglecting to develop the weakness of that capacity which has fallen to his lot, should postpone to an indefinite future the study to which he could easily apply himself now, and to which it may be difficult for him to apply in later life.

You have no time to study ? We confess that the ministrations in some very populous parishes are so laborious, so many sick persons to be visited, so many confessions to be heard, so many charitable works to be promoted, so many useful visits to be made or received, that if to these are added the necessary spiritual exercises, it becomes really difficult to find here and there a few moments for study.

Nevertheless, those holy priests who ought ever to be our patterns know how to set apart, even in these circumstances, a little time for study, and specially for that kind of study which they find most need of ; for it is then more than ever that all superfluous subjects of study must be given up, since it is so difficult to devote one's self

to such as are necessary. Holy priests, we repeat it, in spite of the numerous details of an extensive ministry, find time enough to cultivate learning.

What is their secret, then? This it is, and let us weigh each word well: They scruple to lose a single instant; they regulate their occupations as perfectly as possible, knowing that living by rule multiplies the hours; they take a fellow-traveller when they go to comfort any sick person, and that fellow-traveller is a book; they give up parties of pleasure for fear of dissipation, and because they can dispose of their time better; they avoid great dinners which would rob them of several hours; they omit a visit when it can be done without bad results; they give up a journey which is not either necessary or very profitable; they steal an hour from the rest that nature claims, but which strong health can refuse without danger.

These are the precious secrets of the holy priest; these are the means which he employs to satisfy the pious ardor for knowledge and study that God has given him. Let us be saints ourselves, and like them we shall see that a wide sphere of work and a little study are not absolutely incompatible.

96. Fifth objection: *The theology of common-sense is sufficient for me.* One day we heard this saying, and we remarked it, as giving in its brevity the exact idea of the conduct of certain priests who are, as we think, victims of a complete delusion. These priests having finished a course of theology, such as it is, retain, not the numerous details which it comprises, but a few of the great principles on which it is based; then, aided by their own reason, on which they rely with a confidence not always founded on humility, they deduce as well as they can from these principles practical consequences, by means of which they solve by themselves, without opening a book, or consulting a soul, all the difficulties which they meet with. To act thus is, they say, to follow the theology of common-sense.

This theology is simple, very simple indeed, and does not require great nor toilsome researches; and we may safely say, too, that it exists in perfect agreement with idleness. But who can help seeing the great mistakes which they must make who know and follow only this false light?

First, can they be sure that they still know the great principles of theology, since they never, or almost never, study? Have they not forgotten many of them, and do they not sometimes substitute for the principles that they do not know, those that are suggested by their theology of common-sense?

Supposing, even, that they still remember them, how can they imagine that the *remote* consequences of a principle are always easily discovered, and that individual common-sense is alone sufficient to connect with certainty those remote consequences with the true principle whence they flow?

And further, what becomes of the theology of common-sense in the wide field of *positive law*? Apply the light of simple common-sense to the matter of impediments to marriage, censures, indulgences, deeds of gifts and wills, successions, contracts of all sorts, civil laws in general, so often binding at the bar of conscience; and once more, to all that comes under the scope of positive law, and you will see, should you study later on, how many false decisions you have given, and how many grave errors you have committed!

We affirm, without fear of contradiction, that, if those whose illusions we are now unveiling would consult theological authors, or some learned priest, on such and such a point, which they have hitherto decided by the light of their reason alone, they will acknowledge that this common-sense theology is far from being always theology in its common sense.

97. Sixth objection: *Study is of no use to me; I have a bad memory which retains nothing that I commit to it.* You

are mistaken, dear brother ; your memory retains more than you think, though you complain so much of it. In fact, however narrow may be the circle of your knowledge, are you absolutely ignorant in ecclesiastical learning? Well! who told you that your memory, which retains the little you do know, has reached its highest point, and that there is in it no more room for a single fresh acquisition, however simple? No, no, such is not the case: you accuse your memory falsely; and if you would go to the bottom of things, you would see that your objection is but an evasion which deceives you, and which has been suggested by sloth, dissipation, or some other evil inclination, in order to dissuade you from study, of which you have more need than many others.

Instead of blaming your memory, help it by increasing your application, by the love of recollection and retirement, by habitual reflection, by frequently reading over those essential points the special need of which you recognize every day; help it by written notes, which will imprint matters in your mind better than simply reading, and you will see that, in spite of its weakness, memory will render you great services, which will make you regret not having cultivated it more carefully in time past.

Besides, if, which is highly improbable, you could not acquire fresh knowledge by study, we would say again: Your memory being as bad as you represent it to be, if you do not keep up your scanty knowledge by constant study, are you not afraid of forgetting the little you do know? Study in order to preserve your knowledge, if you do not study in order to acquire more.

98. Seventh and last objection: *I have no taste for study.* The priest who speaks thus has, if no other merit, at least that of candor. Why not avow it? All those whose objections we have mentioned and refuted will say, if sincere, that their bad reasons were the veil which concealed the true one. A man would not give up study if he loved it; it is disgust which makes them give it up.

But how sad for a priest to find in himself this fatal disposition! How much is it to be feared that in saying, I have no taste for study, is meant, I have no taste for recollection, for retirement, for piety, for the sacred tribunal, for preaching, for catechizing, for visiting the sick, for works of zeal, for the ministry altogether!

You have no taste for study! Sound the depth of your conscience, my dear brother; alas! has not this taste given place to many other far less worthy inclinations? Have you not a taste for travelling, card-playing, good cheer, for dissipation and light reading? In one word, and I am grieved to say it, have you not a taste for what God condemns, and a distaste for what He loves?

99. We feel happy in being able to confirm and complete our observations on theological learning by a quotation which seems calculated to make an impression on our readers. Who is the priest who does not know and revere the illustrious Cardinal de Cheverus, whom we may call the Fenelon of the nineteenth century? We read as follows in his life, Book V., No. 4 :

"He sincerely pitied those who, to make their days pass happily, had need of frivolous pastimes, festivities, parties, play, or novels. Are not Holy Scripture," said he, "history, literature, natural science, sufficiently interesting to occupy our short life? When we have in our hands and under our eyes so many things so fit to interest our mind and our heart, so worthy to enrich our understanding and to adorn our memory, how can we lose our time in play and frivolity? For myself," added he, "I need no companion to enable me to spend delightful hours; prayer and study have always been the delight of my life." In fact, the Cardinal was never found idle, or giving himself to any sort of amusement. That mighty soul of his was constantly occupied with serious matters, and knew no other rest than change of occupation. Thus, when tired of business, he sought

rest in the study of antiquity. "When I am tired of the living," he would say, "I go and refresh myself with the dead."

He had a particular attraction for the study of holy Scripture. His biographer writes as follows, on this subject:

"He could not comprehend how Catholics studied the holy writings so little, and were so slightly acquainted with the histories they contain. He often used to reproach those to whom he could speak more freely. 'You read frivolous books,' said he to them, 'perhaps novels, and you neglect the most beautiful of all books, the most touching of all histories. . . .' He wished that book to be read with sentiments of piety, faith, and prayer, and especially with the desire to become better for reading it. This is what he himself did; by repeatedly reading through the Bible he knew it almost by heart, and the Old Testament was as familiar to him as the New; he had meditated upon its historical pictures, its moral sentences, and the application which might be made of both to different positions in life; so that, whatever subject he wished to handle, he had always at hand all the passages which were most applicable to the circumstances. . . ."

We regret that we are obliged to end our quotation, and advise our readers to read its continuation in the very interesting *Life of the illustrious Cardinal*.

Let us here end the weighty subject of theological learning. We have treated it at length, because we are so strongly impressed with its importance. May we have convinced our worthy brethren of the necessity of learning and study! The results of this conviction will be immense in its threefold bearing upon the glory of God, the salvation of souls, and the sanctification of the clergy.

CHAPTER X.

OF THE HOLINESS NECESSARY FOR A PRIEST IN ITS RELATION TO ZEAL.

100. WE shall finish this first part by a chapter of great importance. In it we shall recapitulate nearly all the details into which we have hitherto entered, adding any other hints we may be still able to give respecting the principal virtues that a priest ought especially to practise in order to secure the success of his ministry.

We wish to speak of the indispensable necessity for every priest to apply himself constantly to piety, if he would nourish his zeal, gain thousands of souls to Jesus Christ, and bring abundant blessings upon his labors.

If a priest enjoys a high reputation for piety, if he deserves that reputation more and more every day by conduct truly sacerdotal; if he lives so as to induce other men to say of him, not that he is a *good man*, not even that he is a *good priest*, but that he is a *holy priest*, a *man-of-God priest*, and entirely occupied with his ministry and with the salvation of souls,—he will see all obstacles vanish as by enchantment before him; crowds of sinners will be converted by the sound of his voice; his parish will assume a new aspect, all the acts of his charity and his zeal will give irresistible force to his preaching; and in this ardent and enlightened piety he will find infallible means of being constantly a burning apostle in the pulpit, a tender father in the confessional, an angel at the altar, and everywhere the true representative of Jesus Christ and the worthy continuer of his work.

Let us come now to matters of detail, and let us show fully what he must do to be truly pious, and to pass as such before the eyes of his people.

101. First, we must be well convinced of this, that to deserve the reputation of a holy priest it is necessary to be, in reality, a holy priest.

To pretend to the reputation of piety without being animated by its spirit, and, in order to gain that end, to assume the outward appearance of an exalted devotion which is not rooted in the soul, would be mere hypocrisy, and hypocrisy is a base and infamous vice, by which the good opinion of the people cannot be gained for long. In fact, how can hypocrisy avoid betraying itself soon in a man who appears every day before the eyes of the multitude, and who, by the very nature of his functions, is continually busy among the faithful?

Besides, hypocrisy is a state of perpetual torment, of embarrassment and constraint. To gratify some bad inclination, one may have recourse to this vice for a day, a week, perhaps a few months; but for a year, a lifetime, it is impossible. It is irksome to wear the mask and bear the trappings of virtue, which, though pleasant bonds to the pious soul, are but insupportable fetters to the soul which piety has not warmed.

Moreover, whatever pains a man may take to appear that which he is not, the deception must soon discover itself. True piety has features, characteristics, and attractions, which hypocrisy can never wholly counterfeit. As the one is frank, natural, sincere, open, amiable, and winning; so the other is forced, gloomy, overstrained, cold, and embarrassed, in the miserable part that it labors to play; and when all this scaffolding of duplicity and lies falls to pieces, what disappointment, what confusion, and often what deplorable scandal arises!

Let us be pious, truly and firmly pious, in order to appear in the sight of our people what we really are in the sight of God.

102. The following is, in some measure, the scale of the judgments of society in respect to priests: He is a *bad priest*, first degree. He is a *good creature*, or, as Mgr.

de la Motte, Bishop of Amiens, used to say, "an *excellent-fellow priest*," second degree. He is a *good priest*, third degree. He is a *holy priest*, or simply, he is a *saint*, fourth and last degree.

Now let us mark this. To each of these degrees falls a corresponding share in the fruits of death or the fruits of life, more or less abundant in proportion as we are farther from, or nearer to, the highest degree. The *bad priest* is accursed of God and despised by man; he produces only the fruits of death. The *excellent-fellow priest* is loved by other men on account of his moral virtues; in all probability he would have been a good layman, but he has no zeal, no theological principles, no ecclesiastical learning; he is, in fact, a *good creature*, but he is a *poor priest*; the sacerdotal spirit is wanting in him. The *good priest* is loved by God and man, and is useful in the Church; but let him take heed; in several points the gold of his virtues is not free from alloy, or rather his gold, when closely considered, is often no more than silver. The *holy priest* alone is such as God and man would choose to be a priest. He draws a blessing on his ministry, and receives one in return. His apostolic life has no void; every day is for him a day of abundant harvest; he is the saint of the neighborhood.

Oh! how can men fail to acknowledge such striking truths? or how, when they are acknowledged, refuse to take them as rules of conduct? How can a priest be slow to make every effort to gain the reputation of being a holy priest, since it is to that degree that he must rise in order to produce in marvellous abundance the fruits of salvation in the Church of God?

103. Men are too eager to believe this language exaggerated; or, at least, they flatter themselves that the people are not so hard to please or so clear-sighted as we depict them, and so they hope to acquire with less trouble than we seem to demand the reputation of holy priests.

This is a mere trick of their self-love, which, wishing

to avoid all that is hard for our nature in a life full of zeal, holiness, perfection, such as becomes the priest, secretly insinuates that, provided grave scandals are not given, and we fulfil the chief part of our ministry pretty well, we shall certainly pass with the world for good and holy priests. Oh, how much good might be done in the Church which is not done in consequence of these deplorable illusions which blind so many of her ministers! No, certainly, to deserve the reputation of a holy priest is not so easy as men persuade themselves; no, the people are not so easily blinded on this point as to believe that the priest is *perfect*, when he is only *good*; and that he is a *saint*, when he has only an *ordinary and common piety*.

Let us judge by our own practice. Suppose that we are in the society of priests whom we see for the first time. However little given to observation we may be, do we need much time to distinguish the pious and zealous priests, those united to God and truly animated by the spirit of the priesthood from those who are animated with quite contrary dispositions? The things that are said, the manner of saying them, the action restrained or impetuous, the attitude grave or thoughtless, the abundance or moderation of speech,—these indications, and a thousand others more easy to detect with the eye than to describe with the pen, will show us at once, and often most accurately, who are the most holy priests of the assembly.

And yet it is the first time that we have seen them. What would it be then if we were placed in the condition of the flocks which belong to each of them, if we could watch them every day, if we could meet them at their homes and at ours, near the sick-bed, in the street or road, at the tribunal of penance, in the pulpit, at the altar—in a word, everywhere, since no one is better known in a parish than he to whom its spiritual direction is entrusted?

104. It is, then, positively understood that it is absolutely necessary to be a true priest, a holy priest, since on one side no one will pass for a holy priest among men unless he is really so; and since, on the other, no one will ever exercise a full, abundant, and strikingly fruitful ministry, except in proportion as he is perfectly united to God, animated by His spirit, and really full of that zeal for perfection, that fervent devotion, that lofty piety, which gives to all the works of a saint their so wonderful fertility. Let us now enter into detail, and see what is opposed to the acquisition of the precious character of a holy priest, and how it may be acquired.

105. Would he pass for a holy priest who should hold solitude and silence in aversion, and who should be happy only when plunged in dissipation?

Would his parishioners exclaim: Oh, what a holy priest is our pastor! He is never at home, nor even in his parish. As soon as he has said his mass he is off till the evening; he goes, he comes, he rushes about, he amuses himself, he laughs heartily; to-day he spends with this one of his colleagues, to-morrow with another; and all the week is the same, and all the month is like the week, and all the year like the month. Oh, what a holy man! what a man of God! what a pastor!

106. Would he have the character of a holy priest who should be present at all the festivities in the neighborhood, and who in those festivities should show by his behavior, his manner of speaking, of laughing, of eating and drinking, that he is enjoying himself in these noisy gatherings, that this material, sensual, and unmortified life is what he most especially loves, that he feels there at his ease and in his element?

107. Would the parishioners call him a holy priest who should never be seen at church but when he was there of necessity? If he was never, or almost never, seen to visit the Blessed Sacrament; if nothing manifested his love for the solitude of the sanctuary; if, on

the contrary, he showed that this was not the place of his choice or of his liking ; if, by the rarity of his visits, by their shortness, by his air of distraction and pre-occupation, he offended the piety of the faithful, or, at least, did nothing to revive and to preserve it ; could they say, in truth could they think, that he was a true priest, a holy priest, a priest burning with the ardor of zeal ?

108. Further, would he be commonly regarded as a holy priest who should celebrate the august Sacrifice with excessive haste, such as should induce the faithful to say, as they do sometimes in fact, that they can hardly persuade themselves that they have obeyed the precept of the Church in hearing so short a mass ? This preparation, so short and apparently so devoid of fervor, these hasty movements, these looks wanting in reverence, these signs of the cross abbreviated, those prayers so indistinctly articulated, these hurried genuflections, that noisy and excited talking in the sacristy, that thanksgiving of a few minutes, occasionally omitted altogether,—would all that give the faithful a high opinion of such a priest ? Would they think him animated by ardent zeal for the salvation of souls ? Would any one even have the idea of proposing such a priest as a model of holiness and fervor ?

If nothing else in his conduct were gravely reprehensible, without doubt men would not say of him, he is a *bad* priest ; but would they say, he is a *saint* ? No ; and yet, let us never forget it, that is the praise that we must earn, if we would be a true priest, an apostle, another Christ, a saviour of souls.

109. Would men name as a holy priest one who neglected the sick, and who, after having confessed and administered the sacraments to them, would leave them during a week, a fortnight, perhaps longer, without bringing them a few words of edification to dispose them to cross with less fear and more resignation the

awful passage from time to eternity? Would it be a proof of exalted piety to treat the sacraments, and all holy matters in general, with levity?

For instance, if a priest should go to the confessional without preparing himself, without gravity, without modesty; if he should hurry the confessions; if he should omit all exhortations, or should confine them to two or three words spoken with excessive coldness; lastly, if in the several functions of his ministry there should never appear that depth of feeling, that sweet and persuasive way of speaking, that kind and modest look, that grave and collected carriage—in a word, that happy union of all, which touches even the impious and wins their esteem,—who would be charitable enough to give such an one the title of holy priest?

110. And if he should be happy only in the company of the laity, with whom he should pass hours, and long hours, every day; and whose conversation, without being positively bad, should be constantly characterized by levity, joking, and satire; if he should be the first to spread mirth in every society; if he overpowered the voice of others by his own; if there were never one word of religion on his lips; if politics seemed his chief occupation; if he never seized any opportunity for introducing edifying reflections; lastly, if his cassock alone showed he was a priest,—who would ever praise his fervor and his deep piety?

111. No, surely no; the holy priest will never be known by such features. How sad it is for the man we have depicted (if there be such) to see that in order to give an exact idea of the true priest we must represent him as possessing qualities diametrically opposed to these defects!

In reality, who is the priest whose piety is admired by the people? Who is the priest of whom everybody says, *he is a saint*? It is he who only mixes with the world in moderation, and always for the greater glory of

God and the edification of his fellow-creatures; it is he who abstains from excursions and journeys, the necessity and use of which he has not acknowledged before God; it is he who avoids as much as he can the festivities to which he is invited, and who, when he sometimes feels obliged to take a part in them for the greater glory of God, edifies the guests by his sobriety, his recollection, his modest gravity, leaving everybody convinced that retirement, study, and the labors of his ministry are far more to his taste than those noisy gatherings.

He whom the people proclaim to be a holy priest is one who loves visiting the church; who every day, towards evening, spends some considerable time at the foot of the divine tabernacle, and who, by the gravity of his behavior in the church, by the restraint upon his eyes, and the general reverence of his whole person, imparts, even to the most hardened, some few sparks of the sacred fire with which he is consumed; it is one who ascends the steps of the altar with an imposing dignity, and who behaves throughout the holy Sacrifice with a countenance grave without stiffness, modest without affectation, devout without singularity.

The greatest of sinners are deeply penetrated with respect for this worthy priest, when they see the man of God celebrating the holy mysteries in such a spirit; when they see him leaving the altar with the same piety with which he had approached it; when they see him make a long thanksgiving in the attitude of a man deeply recollected; and thus he gains by his piety their confidence and esteem.

The people, again, call him a holy priest who lavishes on his sick penitents the spiritual succor they need. Faith and piety shine more brilliantly in those circumstances when nature finds nothing to flatter her. The priest who answers quickly and willingly to the first call; who frequently visits the sick even after they have received the sacraments; who listens to them with the

greatest patience and charity; who addresses them some short but earnest and affectionate exhortation, speaking to them as the saints used to speak, of the sorrowful passion and the sacred death of our Lord Jesus Christ, proposing to them that divine death as the pattern for their own,—such are the features that characterize the holy priest.

Would you have more? Nothing is easier; embarrassment in the choice is the only difficulty which could hinder us. To have fixed and regular hours for hearing confessions; to welcome everybody with the same sweetness and kindness, without distinction of age, rank, or sex; never to let any one see that you find the ministry of confession fatiguing and painful; always to speak in the holy tribunal the language of faith, of mercy, and of the purest zeal; to conduct yourself, in respect to all that belongs to the divine ministry, so that everybody may see your joy, your happiness, and your consolation in the performance of your duty. To visit your flock, if you have charge of one; but to visit it in a holy and edifying manner, banishing from your lips all joking, all excessive amusement, and all that is opposed to sacerdotal gravity. To convince your people that you have a special devotion towards the most Holy Virgin, everywhere recommending that devotion, in the pulpit, in the holy tribunal, and also in private conversation. Here are so many new features by which a priest animated by a true and tender piety is recognized.

112. Who does not see, in considering these details which we could easily multiply, that if the Church of God had but such priests as those whose portraits we have drawn, the aspect of dioceses would soon be altered, to the glory of God and to the confusion of unbelief? Who does not see that the zeal of the clergy transforming each priest into an apostle would everywhere produce miracles of conversion and fruits of devotion truly astonishing?

Let us then, in spite of all exterior and interior obstacles,

embrace with ardor that fervent piety which alone can animate our zeal, and render it effective.

113. The subjects we have examined in this chapter are so serious, and we are so fearful of seeing their importance lessened by those excuses which self-love constantly suggests in order to escape what is not to our taste, that we think it our duty to refute the objection which more than one of our readers will doubtless bring against us.

You are going a little too far, some one may say perhaps, for, after all, there are priests who exercise an honorable and fruitful ministry, though they have not reached that high degree of piety you speak of, and without having obtained amongst their people the character of *holy priest*.

Have we ever denied it? By no means. Without doubt, a *good* priest saves souls, procures the glory of God, and does good, sometimes indeed a great deal of good, in the Church; we allow this, and we must allow it, since experience demonstrates it to us every day; but what we affirm is, that should those priests, already *good*, become still more pious, more zealous, more fervent, more united to God, in a word, more holy, and more perfect, they would do more good, much more than they really do.

Now, substitute for those *good* priests you so rightly praise, one of those heroes of the priesthood whom the Church has placed among her saints; choose one of them, neither more talented nor endowed with higher natural gifts than the good priest whose place he is to occupy; further, do not give him anything but the deep piety which distinguished him during his life, and which caused him to be canonized after his death,—is it not evident that he will procure far more abundantly the sanctification of souls, and that if God, in his secret designs, allows that the success of his labors should not answer to the ardor of its zeal, it will be one of those rare, exceedingly rare, exceptions which establish the rule rather than weaken it?

114. Some one again may say that there are priests of common and ordinary piety, but gifted with external advantages, more particularly with the talent for preaching, who exercise a ministry far more fruitful than that of many other priests, more pious and more holy, yet devoid of those natural talents which we have just mentioned.

We allow this most willingly ; but what does that prove against our argument ? Nothing, absolutely nothing. We know that there are priests of great virtue and very little talent, who, on this latter account, exercise a ministry both obscure and limited, and cannot produce any remarkable good ; while other priests, of a common piety, but of extraordinary talent, occupy the highest posts of the Church, and produce a more considerable amount of good through their extensive ministry. It is a fact that is witnessed every day.

God gives to man external talents as instruments and means of success in the work of the sanctification of souls ; we have never denied it ; but what we do maintain is, that if those who have received such talents would unite to them a deep piety, if they would use all their efforts to become saints, they would be astonished themselves at the increased fertility of their zeal ; and then, casting a sad glance on the past, they would sigh deeply as they thought of all the good that they might have done, and have left undone.

115. Now we fear but one thing more, viz., lest many priests, feeling that they are *good* priests, and that they can, by continuing to be what they are, save themselves and exercise a fruitful and honorable ministry, should slothfully keep themselves in the rank where they now are, and even count it a secret merit to have attained to that point, and to stay there.

We earnestly entreat those who are in this position, to repulse with all their power the temptation which would lead them to remain stationary in the ways of piety ; let

them remember what they have often heard, and what they themselves so often say to others, that in the way of perfection, not to advance is to recede; and let them think above all of the abundant harvest which they might produce, of the example of holiness which they might exhibit, of the conversions which they might effect, of the high degrees of celestial glory to which they might attain, of the delightful consolations which they might enjoy, would they but generously throw themselves, *corde magno et animo volenti*, into the high paths of perfection.

PART THE SECOND.

THE PRACTICE OF ZEAL IN THE INTERCOURSE OF THE PRIEST WITH THE DIFFERENT INDIVIDUALS AROUND HIM.

116. IN the first part of this work we have considered the priest as alone; and without referring directly to his intercourse with those among whom he exercises his ministry, we have reminded him of his duties, and of the virtues at which he ought specially to aim, in order to set that good example to his people which is, as we have stated, the first and fundamental exercise of zeal in the work of the ministry, the main condition of the success of his important labors.

Now we must see him at work. In the consideration of the intercourse which must necessarily exist between him and other persons whose society he most habitually frequents, we will explain what should be the nature of that intercourse, in order to render his ministry blessed by God, and fruitful in the salvation of souls.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE INTERCOURSE BETWEEN THE CURÉ AND HIS CURATE.

117. IT is not without a respectful fear that we enter into the subject denoted by our heading. In fact, we are to address a number of venerable and generally venerated Curés, whose eulogium is justly in every mouth, and, which is still better, in every heart. We shall never be

able to express in adequate terms our admiration for the spiritual head of a flock, who with untiring devotion consecrates to it his time, his strength, his talents, his narrow income, in fact, his entire life. Still less could we recount all the good which he effects in the parish entrusted to his charge; he himself is unaware of its extent; it will only be at the Great Day of manifestation that he will see in the brightness of the divine glory the abundant fruits of so many holy and useful works which he practised untiringly with the most humble simplicity during the course of his divine ministry. The very unbeliever is constrained to speak his praises whenever he mentions our worthy pastors; so great is the empire of truth, that his lips betray the secrets of his heart, which very often he is most reluctant to utter.

Though what we are saying applies to all the pastors of souls in the immense empire of the Catholic Church, nevertheless we are bound to draw the public admiration most particularly to the edifying lives of the honored priests of France. We do not believe it possible to find elsewhere an union of virtues, a fund of devotion, self-denial, disinterestedness, zeal, and charity equal to that which is generally conspicuous in their lives.

If we may venture then to give advice to these men of God who we revere from the bottom of our hearts as our masters and our models, we do it less to remedy an evil than to prevent it. They are too wise not to know that man, however eminent in merit and holiness, still possesses an innate weakness which demands the advice of friendship, and the lessons of experience. This double assistance we come to offer in all humility and affection to our estimable fellow-workers.

We feel bound to offer one other observation, on commencing this chapter, to the young colleagues of our worthy Curés. If they do not keep a watchful eye upon themselves, they may possibly, without perceiving it, be affected by the malignant influences of the corrupted

manners of the times. A criticising, independent, and disdainful spirit, despising authority, is the order of the day, and often those very persons who deplore those disorders, in a thousand instances unconsciously commit the faults they so much deplore.

The most profound respect, the most cordial attachment, the most entire submission, the most active and devoted co-operation, this should daily and hourly regulate the curate's conduct towards his superior. If he is his fellow-laborer, he is not his equal; except in the case of his spiritual authority over the penitents that God sends him, and the particular powers conferred by his title as curate, he has for the administration of the parish in general only that share of authority which his superior chooses to commit to him. He is subordinate, in the full meaning of the word, and if he tries to act on a footing of equality with him whom he ought to regard as a father, all the principles of church government will be compromised and overthrown.

This is not only true in the supposition that the conduct of the Curé is irreproachable, but it will still hold good in the case when, which God forbid! his conduct is not entirely free from human weakness. In such circumstances let the curate beware of imitating the disrespectful conduct of Cham towards his father Noe, but let him, like Sem and Japheth, turn his eyes away and cover with the mantle of charity the imperfections of the spiritual father whom God has given him. Let him think more of the faults of himself that he must correct, than of those of his superior for which he is not answerable. Let him think besides, that some day, a Curé himself, he will be glad to find in his assistant that respect, devotedness, and submission that we here recommend so earnestly to him.

Indeed, it would grieve us much to think that a single curate should ever misapply the counsel that we are about to give him, and destroy, instead of building up,

the principle of order that ought to be paramount in every parish.

118. It would be a great mistake to suppose that, with regard to the fruits of zeal in the ministry, a perfect harmony between the Curé and his curate is a matter of minor importance.

Remove that harmony and good understanding, and soon the two chiefs of the flock become discontented, discouraged, envious, perhaps jealous, and for the future incapable of devoting themselves with ardor to the impulses of their zeal.

Should that zeal not be yet extinguished, the result will be in effect much the same; for how is it possible to begin, continue, and accomplish successfully a work of zeal when the two leaders do not act in concert, but regard each other with reserve, distrust, and coldness? Will there exist, in that case, that identity of view, that co-operation, unanimity, and concord necessary to secure success? Might not the very fact that one of the two proposed to undertake a work of charity determine the other to reject it, or at least to refuse his co-operation?

And will the people hold their tongues in the parish? Will not the profane become initiated into all the troubles of the sanctuary? And then will there not be a division in the flock? When they see two chiefs, will they not raise two flags? will they not establish two camps? will they not organize two armies? Can the ministry in such a state of things possibly be fruitful?

119. There is nothing more important than a thorough agreement between the Curé and his curate. There is no sacrifice too great to secure that precious harmony, the destruction of which would be the worst misfortune if the spiritual happiness of the flock is considered; consequently the great anxiety of the good priest will be to consolidate its reign.

As it is the Curé who ought to be foremost in setting an example of every virtue, as his experience is

greater, and his reputation for wisdom higher, his acquirements more matured, and his virtues more solid than those of his curate, it is to him that we turn at first to entreat him to use his best exertions constantly to promote the most perfect concord between his fellow-laborer and himself.

Besides, we may say truly that the Curé is the most interested in maintaining this good understanding. In fact, has he not all the responsibility of the spiritual administration of the parish?

In fact, it is upon him that the responsibility of the spiritual administration rests, and it is almost exclusively as for him, or against him, that we may regard the praise or censure passed upon this administration. Let us add, that the Curate is in the parish only for a time, and probably for a very short time ; whilst the Curé is fixed here with so much of permanence and stability as should oblige him to do everything to prevent the existence of division in the parish of which he will, perhaps, be the pastor to the end of his life.

120. The misunderstanding between the Curé and the Curate may sometimes be dated, although hardly perceptible, from the day of the arrival of the latter in the parish.

The Curé, learning that his Bishop has appointed such and such a priest for his Curate, very naturally desires to know what this coadjutor is like ; and if the information which he solicits is not so favorable to him as it might be, certain unfortunate prejudices result, which cause him to receive the new-comer with some little coolness. Under the influence of these prejudices, he will perhaps impose upon him, from the very first day, burdensome and painful conditions ; he will watch him with a suspicious and distrustful air ; he will lay hold of particular words, uttered with embarrassment and timidity, and will always find means to justify his prejudices, and say that he has not been mistaken. Every

day the evil will be aggravated ; and this Curate finding in his Curé neither sympathy nor support, nor marks of confidence, will wrap himself in a mysterious reserve, and maintain a state of isolation painful to both, and most hurtful to the spiritual interests of the parish.

121. To remedy these grave inconveniences, or rather to prevent them, a Curé, if he is a man of God, and if he has the fruits of zeal, and the salvation of as many souls as possible, really at heart, ought to receive with gentle kindness and entire openness of heart the coadjutor whom Providence sends to him. If he remarks any timidity or embarrassment in him, he should set him at once at his ease, and assure him that he will do all in his power to render him happy. All this should be said and done with an easy frankness, and with an air of unequivocal pleasure.

But if the knowledge of any antecedents, which are not to his advantage, has anticipated the Curate at the parsonage, the Curé, if he is a man of God, and if he puts the spiritual interests of the parish before everything else, should abstain from manifesting any dissatisfaction he may feel.

The first interview should be kind, cordial, and affectionate. Who knows, besides, whether the reports concerning this Curate are strictly conformable to truth? Who knows whether they do not proceed from some doubtful source? But were they as true as they are perhaps exaggerated, why not derive all the help possible from this Curate, for the greater glory of God and the sanctification of souls?

He has faults; who has not? Grave faults, perhaps: Well! why not try to correct him of them? Why not give him, from the first, a lesson in zeal and charity, by a reception for which he will be the more grateful in proportion as he feels himself unworthy? Poor young priest! He would never, perhaps, have been what he is, but that he has never received such a lesson.

Besides, what benefit will arise from a cold and cutting reception? Will it send him away? By no means. He comes in the name of the Bishop, and fortified with his authority; he must, therefore, remain, and he will remain. Will it correct him of his faults? Not the least in the world; on the contrary, it will only make him indignant, and harden him the more. Will it make him work with ardor, and seek from the occupations of his zeal, in the bosom of the parish, that consolation which the parsonage denies him? By no means, again; for who does not see that everything in such a reception is of a nature to chill and discourage him? In a word, will it ensure to the Curé, in the person of his Curate, an active co-operator, a devoted auxiliary? Alas! will it not rather be the exact reverse? If this Curate has been already reproached with not supporting his Curé, with joining with his enemies, secretly fomenting divisions and parties, how can his present Curé fail to see that he is taking, from the very first, the surest means of drawing down all these miseries upon himself and his parish?

122. Another germ of division, which some Curés might plant upon the arrival of a Curate, would be the refusal to accompany him and make him acquainted, by visits in due form, with his parishioners and the parish.

If this custom did not exist, we should have nothing to say, unless it be that we should approve of its introduction, particularly in parishes of small population, where it is not difficult to visit everybody in a short space of time; but, in truth, if this custom did not exist, no one would take it amiss if it were not observed, and the Curate himself would be perfectly content. But if it was an established custom; if, invariably, upon the arrival of his Curates, the Curé had visited his parish with them throughout, and if he did not choose to do so with this one, would it not be showing him a want of respect openly before the parish, and marking him, at once, by a humiliating exception?

And what could he say if any one reproached him with not having visited the people? Above all, what could he say if he were asked why the Curé had not gone the round of the parish with him, as with all the previous Curates? Imagine the annoyance, the embarrassment, and the confusion of this young priest!

To impose this painful ordeal upon him at the very outset, would it not be the proximate occasion, first of discontent, then of misunderstanding, and at last of a rupture, more or less open, more or less scandalous; and all for what? Because the superiors have not appointed the Curate for whom he wished; because the antecedents of this man may not be favorable; because his appearance, his manners, etc., are not taking; as if this Curate had nominated and placed himself in the parish of his own choice, and as if this parish, which will probably suffer so much from the disunion which is beginning, ought to be so severely chastised for a fault which can in no respect be imputed to it.

123. The evil would make still further progress, if a Curé not only refused to make his new Curates known by general visits to the parishioners and the parish, but even took it ill that in their occasional walks, or while visiting the sick, they entered the house of this or that parishioner, in order to make acquaintance with their flock by degrees.

If the Curé should allow himself to be influenced by narrow and mean ideas, he might go so far as to persuade himself that his Curate could not set foot in the house of a single parishioner without immediately sowing there the seeds of a confederacy or party; and as soon as he should become acquainted with such a visit, we should see him disturbed, uneasy, anxious, and intentionally cold in his manner to this Curate, who, thus checked, would become sad and discouraged, while that zealous ardor, from which he had expected so much fruit and consolation, would be extinguished.

Who could tell the bad effects of such conduct? Who could see without sorrow the obstacles which it would place in the way of those works of sanctification which this Curate was meditating, as we may suppose, with the best and purest intentions? But who could tell also how rigorous an account such a Curé would have to render of the many graces of conversion, attached, it may be, to the ministry of his Curate, which he will have nullified, as well as of the many fruits of salvation which he might have assisted in developing, and which he will have stifled in the birth? For the rest, it is clear that this applies to the case in which he should have as his Curate a holy priest, one animated by the purest zeal, and incapable of throwing away the fruit of his pious visits by employing them in the promotion of secret intrigues, or unworthy factions, against which we could not exclaim too loudly.

But this restriction once made, supposing the Curate to be a good priest, we should sincerely pity the blindness of a Curé who, being entirely taken up with apprehensions of an intrigue, should forget that he is adopting the very means to produce those divisions and those parties in his parish, of which he has such excessive dread. In fact, what are the elements of a party in a parish? These are the two principal: the discontent of the Curate, and parishioners sharing in this discontent.

Now, it is clear that the Curé who should act in this manner would bring about these two things: the discontent of the Curate, that is evident; parishioners to share it, that must invariably take place; for a Curate, to whatever isolation his superior may sentence him, is never without partisans in a parish; this Curate has more or less penitents, and, of course, every penitent would take up the cudgels in his behalf against the Curé; besides, this latter is sure to have some enemies in the parish; what Curé has not? and these people will

be delighted to rally round the standard of the Curate, as the excuse and justification of their opposition.

Here, then, are the elements of a party ready made. If these elements remain inactive, if the party is not formed, it is because the Curate neutralizes these fatal principles of division by his piety and good sense ; as to the Curé, it is clear that he will have done everything to produce the schism which he apprehends.

124. It is quite possible that a Curé might justify to himself the conduct we have here censured, by the conviction that he would not act as he does except from the extreme fear of seeing a party formed against him in his parish. We think that this fear, although blamable when carried too far, shows, nevertheless, that he who allows it to enter his mind, is actuated by the laudable desire of preserving the parish from the incalculable evils arising from parties, etc.

But let us take care : the enemy of our salvation is very subtle ; self-love is no less so. Without our being aware of it, this apprehension of divisions may very likely be merely a veil to conceal from us the secret motive of our conduct. This motive, were we to search our innermost heart, may be only so much jealousy. Yes, it may be this passion which causes all that we have just seen, and much more which will shortly occupy us.

Now, we need only uncover this wound, in order to show its hideousness ; and, to encourage so vile a passion, would any one dare to impede the steps and to retard the onward march of a Curate who, we may suppose, requires but to be powerfully seconded, frankly encouraged, and wisely directed, in order to effect in the parish no inconsiderable benefit ?

125. Another cause of disunion and misunderstanding, which some Curés would introduce, lies in their dislike to allowing their Curates to preach.

These latter, knowing how important the ministry of preaching is, and how beneficial it is for the priest to

practise it frequently while still young, will of course occasionally express a wish to appear in the pulpit more often than they are allowed.

What is there offensive in the modest expression of this desire? What can be more suitable, more natural, and, indeed, more conformable to the directions of several diocesan statutes?

"It is very useful," say those of Coutances, "for young Curates to exercise themselves early in preaching, so as to acquire the habit. A Curé can and ought to exhort his Curate to preach from time to time, help him with his advice, encourage him, and allow him reasonable time for preparing his sermons." *

Assuredly, every good and zealous Curé would approve the humble and modest request which his Curate makes for permission to exercise himself in the ministry of the word; every Curé who, wishing sincerely to save the souls which are entrusted to him, will despise the pitiable suggestions of self-love and envy, will see proof of his zeal in his Curate's request; and this request will increase his esteem and affection for him. He will rejoice in the Lord at having an active fellow-laborer who, full of vigor and of youth, burns with the desire to exhibit himself in the breach, and to snatch from the Evil One the thousands of sinners whom he drags each day to the depth of hell.

But it will not be thus with a Curé (if there be any such, which we do not believe) who, in his calculations, should in some measure place the salvation of souls only in the second rank. If he has the misfortune to lend an ear to jealousy, he will be always fearing to see himself surpassed; if he learns more especially that, in preaching, his Curate is more generally liked than himself, it may be he will not overcome his repugnance to letting him preach; it may be, several months will pass without

* Ancient Statutes of the Diocese of Coutances, p. 23.

the word of God being once declared from the lips of his Curate.

If the observations of the latter, if his requests, his entreaties even, remain without effect, can it be said that the Curé who refuses to listen to them, takes the right means of attaching his Curate to himself, and of maintaining that concord, that perfect harmony, which we have shown to be indispensably necessary for the spiritual good of the parish?

126. There is yet one piece of advice which we think it right to give in all sincerity, and this advice we address to those Curés who are tempted to claim exclusively the honor of the solemn celebration of the Holy Sacrifice. It is their right, we at once acknowledge, and we exhort the Curates to remember it. But it is often very praiseworthy to give up a strict right, in order to procure a greater good, and we think this principle receives its application here.

If from the first to the last Sunday in the year it is the Curé only who is seen at the altar; or if the rare exceptions are made, not in favor of the Curate, but in favor of some strange priests, it is impossible that so marked an exclusion should not be commented upon in the parish; it cannot be otherwise, and always to the disadvantage of the Curé, who, if the slanderous tongues are to be believed, is always wanting to show himself off, and to put his Curate in the background. This malicious observation, to which it is always painful to subject one's self, to whom would it be made? Sometimes, perhaps, it would be made directly to the Curé; but more often the complaint would be carried to the Curate. Presuming that he himself shares the discontent of his adherents, they would think they were making themselves agreeable to him by their sympathy with the seeming isolation to which he is reduced.

The Curate who should see, beyond possibility of doubt, that the same remark is made in the parish

which he has made a hundred times to himself, would be in a slippery position. If, unfortunately, this Curate were fickle, imprudent, little established in piety, and, in addition, already discontented with his Curé on other points, it is to be feared that he would reply to the condolences of his partisans by confidences likely to lead to bad results. It is so natural to confide our troubles to those who prepossess us with demonstrations of interest and compassion, especially when they guess our griefs, and are the first to converse with us upon them ! Such conduct and such disclosures would, it is true, deserve severe blame, and would deserve it the more because, we repeat it, the Curé, in celebrating the solemn office of the Sunday, not only uses his right, but even fulfils a duty inherent to his commission.

Nevertheless, in the name of prudence, charity, and peace, we beg that the following observation and rule may be received with favor.

Let the Curé officiate the more frequently, that will shock no one ; let him reserve the right of officiating on days of great solemnity, that is as it should be ; it seems even that something would be wanting in the pomp of a solemnity of the highest order, if the office were not celebrated by the first pastor of the parish. But, with the exception of these cases, we think it advisable that a Curé should from time to time let his Curate officiate ; particularly when he knows that his predecessor acted thus ; finally, we think it even more especially needful to follow our advice, if it be known, directly or indirectly, that several parishioners disapprove of the conduct of the Curé in this point, and make it, more or less openly, a matter of censure.

127. But what would surpass all that we have said, and would produce the most deplorable results, would be the blindness of a Curé who should pursue his Curate even to the tribunal of penitence with petty vexations and annoyances of detail, which must strike with

barrenness the most important branch of his divine ministry.

This must happen if he disputed with him too minutely upon his code of morals, finding it either too severe or too relaxed, and against which he should pronounce with vehement energy, pretending that there is no good code of moral theology except that which he himself follows.

This, again, must happen, if he lost his temper with his Curate, and showered upon him a storm of unkind words and even severe reproaches, because he has learned that some one of his penitents whom he considered, for certain outward actions, unworthy of absolution, had gone to ask from his Curate, and had obtained from him, the sacraments which he, the Curé, had just refused; the fault would be more reprehensible still, if it were question of a point of morality, contested perhaps, but cast, like so many others, into the wide realm of opinion, and supported moreover, as we may suppose, by important, numerous, and highly estimable theological authorities.

This, lastly, must happen if a Curé were excessively annoyed at hearing that some of his penitents were become the penitents of his Curate. Persuading himself that nothing can justify such a desertion; thinking, as every confessor is naturally inclined to think, that his direction ought not to intimidate any penitent, perhaps he will listen only to his own discontent, and will be tempted to regard his Curate as a usurper of his authority, as a monopolist of penitents, and as a haughty priest, who feeds his vanity with a numerous train of clients.

If he does not go so far as to express these thoughts in a plain, precise, and formal manner, he will, perhaps, communicate them by dry and cutting words, or by an affected indifference which is sure to produce as much as, and often more effect than, plainly worded accusations. And all this would be said and done without the least

thought in the world that loss of souls might be the result.

Who can tell, however, the inconceivable evils which conduct so seriously blamable produces in the fold of Jesus Christ?

It must be allowed that if the Curate is a holy priest, occupied entirely in saving the sinners who have recourse to his ministry, it must be most painful to him to see unhappy souls in a state of sacrilege, not daring, on one side, to confess to their Curé such or such a grievous sin, and not daring, on the other, to withdraw from the direction of this Curé, even for one or two confessions, because, without any ill-will no doubt, he has had the imprudence to manifest the pain which his penitents cause him by their desertion. If we knew a Curé who pursued the line of conduct towards his Curate which we have described in a way of supposition only, we should take the liberty of saying to him: "What should you think, dear brother, and what confusion would cover you, if this Curate, who has just received one of your penitents, could be freed for one moment from the law of secrecy imposed upon him, and were to say to you, 'I have received your penitent, yes; but why have I received him? Because for twenty years, not daring to open his conscience to you, he has been living in a state of sacrilege. . . . This is why I have received him; this is why I have received so many others'?"

This would be assuredly a flash of illuminating light for this Curé; instructed by this blessed revelation, with what energy he would say: Woe to the priests! woe to the Curés, confessors most of all, charged by this double title with the care of souls, if they chain their penitents to their own confessional, and if they fail to put these poor souls perfectly at their ease by assuring them that it would be extremely painful to them to learn that all their penitents, without one exception, did not go freely, when they feel their need, to confess their sins either to

their curates, or to any other lawful priest ! The blood of Jesus Christ, profaned by thousands of unworthy communions, cries vengeance against them, *vox sanguinis . . . clamat de terrâ*, and this divine blood accuses them of being the primary cause of these numerous sacrileges.

128. This chapter is already of considerable length, and yet we have not said all upon the vast and important matter which it embraces. Thus, we have not yet assigned, as a possible cause of misunderstanding, those defects of character which, if carried to a certain excess by the Curés, would make it difficult for them to find Curates who can sympathize with them.

What shall we say, for example, of sensitiveness in an exaggerated form ? Who among us has not had, at some time of his life, more or less to suffer from this defect of character ? Would it not be distressing to a Curate, really the friend of his Curé, as we suppose him to be, and incapable of voluntarily causing him the most trifling annoyance, if he saw himself every moment closely observed with a suspicious and distrustful air, and, upon the merest appearances, judged with a severity which he could not under any circumstances deserve ? What can be more provoking for him, if he has the sincere desire to do well, than to see a look, a gesture, a smile, an action maliciously interpreted, which twenty others, in the place of his Curé, would not have even thought of blaming ?

What a service would a faithful friend render to such a Curé, if he could convince him that he ought to attribute to himself alone the troubles which he feels ! And this is most true ; when any one has a naturally suspicious and distrustful disposition, an imagination excited, heated, troubled by an excessive sensitiveness, which he obstinately refuses to acknowledge, this imagination alone makes the evil of which he complains.

And this evil is great ; for that is a great evil which has the effect of putting a wall of ice between a Curé and

his Curate. What sympathy, what confidence, what attachment can be expected from a Curate who, full of the best intentions, as we once more suppose, should see his Curé unceasingly occupied in defaming them, and should be treated every moment as a traitor by him whose worthy fellow-laborer and faithful friend he wishes to be, at any cost?

129. It would be very painful, again, so far as regards good harmony and the blessed fruits which spring out of it, for a Curé to have a temper so rough and so harsh, that a gentle and amiable word should scarcely ever temper the bitterness of his reprimands. If he had as Curate a man who endeavored to perform the functions of his office as well as possible, who studied the customs, the tastes, the little caprices even, of his Curé, so as to conform to them to the utmost of his power; and if, in return for the precautions which he took and the restraint which he imposed on himself, he had nothing to expect but a cold silence, a gloomy look, a dry and perhaps cutting word, how can we help seeing the deplorable consequences of such conduct? How can we help seeing the insurmountable obstacle which he would place in the way of the spiritual good of the parish by depriving himself voluntarily, and by his own fault, of the valuable co-operation of the Curate?

Would it be a small thing, moreover, at the tribunal of conscience, and before God, to extinguish the ardor of a young priest who testified the desire of expending his zeal for the profit of souls? Would it be a small thing to scandalize this Curate by hastiness, roughness, and perpetual annoyances? Would it be a small thing, lastly, to give the parish the mournful spectacle of disunion, instead of the examples of gentleness, concord, and charity, which it has a right to expect from him who ascends the pulpit only to recommend these virtues for our example?

130. It is not sufficient, we believe, for a character to

be free from that harshness of which we have just spoken; it is further necessary for a Curé, and doubtless still more so for a Curate, to possess that amenity of manner, that suavity of language, that perfect amiability of person, in one word that uniform graciousness, which, from the first, gains the confidence and the attachment of all with whom he is in the habit of associating.

Such a result cannot be attained if the Curé be cold, gloomy, and taciturn; if he be a stranger to all that is comprehended under kindness, gentleness, and consideration. He may not, perhaps, be actually harsh towards his Curate; he may not, it is true, be in the habit of reprimanding him severely; he may not embarrass the activity of his zeal by excessive blame; so far, this is well; but if, although he has had no ground for reproaching him, he has yet never given him one amiable word, one gracious smile, one earnest encouragement; if his cold, icy character has manifested nothing of all this, can it be denied that such an one is justly liable to reproach?

Let us suppose a Curé to be habitually in this disposition, what would be the result? It is easy to foresee. The Curate will ever be uncertain whether what he does is approved or blamed. Advice, encouragement, congratulation, all will be wanting to him. If he does good in the parish, assuredly he will have all the merit of it; but, on the contrary, if he should make a mistake, if the warmth of his zeal should carry him beyond the bounds of discretion; if he should make a false step, or undertake works whose value consists alone in the good intention from which they spring, will not his Curé be the real though involuntary accomplice, he who, by one single word, one wise counsel, one simple sign of disapprobation, or even, in particular cases, by a formal act of opposition, had the power from the first to arrest the evil of which he deploras, but too late, the melancholy consequences?

In the same way, if this Curate, without cause, as we suppose, meets no sort of kindness from his Curé; if he feels himself deprived of the lessons of experience which he expected to receive at his hands, if in addition, he perceives clearly the uselessness of his own advances, and of the marks of devotion he has shown towards him,—can such a Curé complain of the little sympathy and attachment which his Curate manifests towards him?

131. That which would still more estrange a Curate from his Curé, is the little confidence he may receive from the latter; when, for instance, he has recourse to tricks and little subterfuges in order to conceal from him the knowledge of certain acts of parochial administration, which it would frequently be most important that they should ripen and execute together.

It might happen, without doubt, that he might find in his Curate a light, inconstant, injudicious priest, imprudent in his words and actions; in such a case, it is clear that, with regard to certain weighty and delicate affairs, reserve, or even complete silence, would be a duty incumbent upon a prudent Curé. But if it were otherwise, if the Curate possess a wise and enlightened zeal; if his virtue be undeniable, and his devotion to his Curé well known, would the reserve of which we are speaking be right here? Would it not be mortifying for such a Curate to perceive that his Curé, reserved to excess, conceals from him such or such a matter of administration that he has in view? that he confides it to his friends, to the laity even, without deigning so much as to hint to him that such a thing is projected? If parishioners mention the subject to him as a well-known fact, what will he say if it is the first time he hears of it? If he is a holy priest, he will and he ought to do his utmost to conceal the indelicacy of his Curé who thus leaves him in ignorance of that which is known to all; but if he is not altogether a holy priest; if he has already had some little causes of grievance against his Curé, is it not to be feared

that he may give utterance to many an ill-advised expression to those parishioners who have thus opened a way for them? And in consequence, what disorder! what disunion! what scenes at the parsonage! and what scandals, perhaps, in the parish!

Should not the Curé and the Curate, when animated by the same zeal and the same virtue, morally form but one and the same person? Should not the Curate, when he deserves the confidence of his Curé, be the first advised of those works of the ministry which the latter proposes to undertake? Can such a want of confidence on the part of the Curé, can such dissimulation, such artificial evasions, have any other effect than to create coldness and mutual distrust between two men whom the glory of God and the salvation of souls imperatively require to be in perfect unity?

132. Food and lodging are again not unfrequently the cause of coldness and discontent. In general, it is plain that the most comfortable and agreeable room, after that of the Curé, ought to be appropriated to the Curate. The only exception to this rule should be in favor of the aged father or mother of the Curé, should they live with him.

But if this room of which we speak be given to a more distant relative; if, again, this relative is of no very distinguished rank, and has never been accustomed to much luxury in his lodging, does not the Curé expose himself to the merited reproaches of his Curate, and consequently to an amount of discontent which may, perhaps, be the germ of an unpleasant disunion? But what would it be if the Curate be very uncomfortably lodged, and might be quite the contrary if his Curé had but a little consideration, and would make such or such trifling repairs, the expense of which is not worth mentioning? What must he not feel under such circumstances, when, in order to lodge the Curate comfortably, it is only necessary to assign to his use the room ordinarily reserved for

the reception of occasional visitors? Is it not plain that in this manner one may prevent the murmurs and the coldness, the effects of which are always more or less to be lamented?

133. As for diet, we alluded to it with reluctance; still, should there exist any Curés who from excess of parsimony allow their Curates nothing beyond absolute necessities, why need we refuse them the benefit of good advice?

Should a Curate have been somewhat delicately reared in times past; should he have but feeble health or weak digestion, would it be right, would it be charitable even, not to modify in some degree the ordinary fare of the parsonage? Would there be any justification of such a course in language like the following:

“Do not speak to us of these young priests; nothing comes up to their delicacy and sensuality; mortification is to them but a theory, from which in practice they recoil. Why, indeed, should the Curate be more particular than the Curé?” Why?—Because, we may reply, this Curé, as we suppose him, is not sufficiently so himself, and glosses over an excessive parsimony with the name of economy and mortification!

Sometimes, nevertheless, he may be actuated by a less unworthy motive; the simple force of habit may influence him. Very likely he has himself always been contented with plain and coarse food, and for his own part, he finds it good enough; he finds it wholesome and very suitable. Endowed with a robust constitution which has never been injured by delicacy of diet, it is difficult for him to believe in the weakness of constitution in others.

Nevertheless, it is but too true that there are Curates, and many even, who would suffer extremely from this austere diet; it is but too true that they may occasionally make this the subject of complaint, and for this reason alone entreat their superiors to assign them a different post.

Far be it from us to wish to justify the improper complaints and unsuitable murmurs of a Curate who without any reasonable motive should be dissatisfied, and proclaim pretensions which must give a pitiable idea of his virtue. Nothing could be less edifying than to appear, by the discontent of which they are guilty, to be in alliance with a class of sensual men whom St. Paul stigmatizes with so much energy when he says : "*Multi ambulantes, quos sæpe dicebam vobis (nunc autem et flens dico) inimicos crucis Christi, quorum finis interitus, quorum Deus venter est, et gloria in confusione ipsorum, qui terrena sapiunt.*" And let it not be said, as an apology for their conduct, that they remunerate the Curé for their board; for, independently of there being no justification in this of a sensuality which the law of God condemns, we all know that the remuneration is almost always far from covering the expense which such sensuality occasions.

And one word more, before concluding this article, upon the disgusting want of cleanliness which is sometimes observable in the kitchens of certain parsonages. Why commit the preparation of the food to that septuagenarian or perchance still more aged female? She does what she can, doubtless; but unhappily she cannot any longer be cleanly.

But it is my mother,—it is my sister,—it is an aged aunt. No matter; all these relations, at least as cooks, are henceforward out of their place.

But they still do their duty very well. I have no complaint to make of them. Very possibly; but is it so with your Curate? He dare not inform you, perhaps; but if you knew the violent effort he has to make at each repast, and his hearty desire to become the fellow-laborer of a Curé who will not put him to so severe a trial, you might probably comprehend how vexatious it is to render all your Curates dissatisfied one after another, to prevent their remaining in the parish, and to impede the operations of their zeal for such a reason as this.

134. This, again, may cause considerable annoyance to Curates, and embarrass them painfully; if, for instance, their Curés have certain customs which they do not think at all bad, which they think even positively good, and which they absolutely require the Curate to adopt.

Here is, I suppose, a Curé who dines out three or four times a week with his parishioners or his brother clergy. He loves society; his health is too robust to be ever disordered by great dinners; he declares that he requires recreation; he pretends that the pleasure which he gives to the person with whom he dines contributes not a little to maintain a good understanding; in short, he has a thousand reasons, in his own judgment excellent, and all convincing him that it is advantageous to persist in his custom.

But as all the world does not see things in the same light, and as he has perhaps heard it remarked that some of his parishioners are only moderately edified in seeing him dine so seldom at the parsonage, he would gladly strengthen his position by the countenance of some good priest. Now, who shall keep the Curé in countenance if not his Curate? He therefore urges his Curate to accompany him, and with such pressing solicitations, that a direct refusal is, if not absolutely impossible, at least extremely difficult.

Nevertheless this Curate is far from sharing in the inclinations and tastes of his Curé on this point. His health suffers from great dinners; his recollection, his piety, his exercises of devotion, suffer still more than his health; and then, he remembers the recommendation so often given him at the seminary, to be present as seldom as possible at noisy gatherings, and least of all at any great feastings. All this presses him keenly to reply to the Curé's solicitations in the negative, at the risk of incurring bitter reproaches and annoyances of various kinds.

Thus he is placed in a state of conflict with his Curé.

Am I, or am I not to go with him? he says. If I do not go, I foresee only coldness and dissatisfaction; if I do go, my conscience rises up, and tells me that in these frequent parties I shall lose my recollection, my piety, my time, and my health.

Worse still, if this conflict occur often; but when we consider that it occurs almost every week, we can understand that the Curate gets tired of so many attacks, and ends by requesting his superiors to give him another post, in which he has not to lament perpetually the painful alternative of either violating his conscience, or crossing his *Curé*.

What we have said of dinner parties refers equally to many other usages followed by a *Curé*, which he desires to impose upon his Curate; such as journeys, useless and too frequent visits, card-playing, etc. To try to compel a curate to adopt his various usages, when it is plain that he regards them with extreme repugnance, is to place him in a habitual state of discomfort and annoyance. The *Curé* should observe this invariable rule, to avoid as far as lies in his power all that can interfere with his Curate's enjoyment of that calm, that happiness, that moral wellbeing which blunts the thorns of the ministry, and peculiarly facilitates the pious exercises of his zeal.

135. The difficulties arising from the division of the surplice-fees are again, or at any rate may easily be, a frequent occasion of misunderstanding between the two parties. Some Curates are too exacting upon this point, it is true. They display a bad spirit, and resemble mercenaries rather than apostolic workmen.

But perhaps, too, some *Curés* would do well to yield a little more in the way of generosity and disinterestedness. Strong in their rights, which on this point are effectually most comprehensive, they must not forget that their first duty, their first care, we might even say, their first interest, rightly understood, is not to increase their

savings, but to establish peace in the parsonage, and to ensure the cordial attachment of a Curate whose co-operation will perhaps produce abundant fruits of salvation, if it is not impeded by too rigorous measures. They ought to remember, with respect to their rights, that if any one needs to weigh attentively the maxim "*summum jus, summa injuria*," it is the Curé when he is engaged in assigning the share of the surplice-fees due to the Curate. We shall not venture to say what this portion ought to be, knowing that it must depend upon many particular and local circumstances which it is impossible to know beforehand.

We shall only give our opinion, that a Curé, who is a man of God, ought, in calculating his expenses, to let his own personal share and that of the household be clearly understood; then the share of the church and of the poor; and last, but with moderation, the share for ordinary and common contingencies. If, after this, he finds a good round sum remaining, which he might wish either to lay aside in his strong box, or expend in frivolous purchases, he need not hesitate to act liberally towards his Curate, and he may rest convinced that God will bless, even in this world, the disinterestedness which he has displayed.

136. In all the advice which we have as yet given, we have taken for granted that there was but one Curate in the parish; it is plain that this advice is equally applicable where there are more than one. Only we think it a duty to make this special recommendation to the Curés who have two or more Curates, that they carefully avoid everything which is of a nature to raise jealousies or divisions between them.

These misfortunes, so injurious to peace, to quiet brotherly union, and to the good of the parish, are sure to arise if a Curé should exhibit to one of his Curates marks of affection and esteem which he withholds from the others; for instance, if he makes him preach or

officiate more frequently; if he makes him a companion by preference in his visits, his walks, and excursions; if he is in the habit of relieving him from any painful duties, or of granting him any privileges, and all this with particular demonstrations of friendship and evident partiality.

This preference must grieve those who do not share in it, and who have the pain of witnessing it every moment.

137. We may conclude from all this that a Curé full of zeal and animated by the keen desire to effect the greatest possible good in his parish, must accept it as a great truth that one of the most efficacious means of success is the maintenance of perfect harmony between himself and his Curate.

Therefore he must neglect nothing which will assist him in attaining this end. He must keep strict watch over his own temper, in order to repress everything on his own side which may be blamable. He must, while keeping a paternal eye upon his Curate, nevertheless leave him considerable latitude, so long as he knows that it will not be abused, and place the fewest possible impediments in the way of his zeal, while he knows that its operations are directed by prudence, and by a firm and enlightened piety. His reprimands, which should never be omitted when they are deserved, should be always accompanied by an amiable gentleness, and based upon such clear reasons that the mere mention of them will be sufficient to gain the conviction of every wise and unprejudiced man. If the Curate is attacked by any one, if his intentions are blackened or misinterpreted, as soon as the Curé is informed of it, he is bound to undertake his defence, and prove to the whole parish that he places the interests of his Curate side by side with his own. There need be no affectation, or hypocritical demonstrations of friendship; but frankness, kindness, confidence, perfect gentleness, consideration, and frequent marks of attachment.

With such dispositions a Curé will generally gain the affection of his Curate ; and this Curate, loving his Curé cordially, will perhaps repay, in return for his kindnesses, even greater services than he has received from him; for who can tell the services which a Curate devoted to his Curé may not daily render him in his parish?

CHAPTER II.

THE INTERCOURSE OF THE CURATE WITH HIS CURÉ.

138. WHENEVER we explain to our people the fourth commandment of the Decalogue, we always feel embarrassed, on account of the necessity of pointing out, in the presence of children and servants, the duties of fathers, and mothers, and of heads of families. Children and servants are delighted to find the preacher undertaking their defence, and plainly reminding their elders of the obligations incumbent upon them, from which they are too ready to excuse themselves. The public censure of their superiors' conduct is considered by the inferiors as a justification of their own conduct; and their satisfaction is diminished only by the equally exact account which follows of the duties incumbent upon themselves.

This is precisely the position in which we now find ourselves. No single chapter in the whole work will please Curates more than our last. Not a sentence, not a word, but they approved, ratified, justified, and welcomed it with that sardonic smile which means, capital, capital !

God grant that when they themselves become Curés in their turn they may read that chapter with as much pleasure as they did when Curates. God grant that then, as now, they may say at the end of each sentence,

capital, capital! God grant, also, that they may read with even more pleasure than the last, this present chapter, which most especially concerns them!

But, alas! we listen eagerly to lessons addressed to our neighbors, and have only indifference and aversion for those addressed to ourselves. Such a Curate will write an excellent essay on the duty of a Curé, and yet, when he becomes a Curé, will completely forget his first essay, to think only of his forthcoming essay upon the duties of a Curate.

Let us not be guilty of such wilful blindness; let us take to ourselves all that applies to us among the warnings which God sends through whatever channels; and watch against the deplorable delusion that opens the eyes of so many to the faults of others, while it closes them obstinately upon their own.

139. But some Curate will perhaps say, Can I fail to recognize the truth and accuracy contained in the long chapter that I have just read? Can I refrain from applying such and such passages of that chapter to my Curé, who so well deserves them? Can I even help feeling a little satisfaction at seeing, through the light of the principles that you have just established, that I am not so blamable as I have been told again and again, and that the chief fault does not lie on my side?"

Beware, beware! we are now treading on the edge of a precipice, and a single false step will precipitate us into its depths. The Curé and the Curate have reciprocal duties to fulfil. Should the Curé disregard his obligation, it is an evil, undeniably, and, perhaps, it may be a very great evil, for which God will hereafter justly punish him. But, however great such evil may be, however striking his neglect, neither the evil nor the neglect can release the Curate from the unconditional obligations that his position of Curate imposes upon him towards his superior.

An example will help to illustrate this important point.

Suppose I am talking with a Curé; and while we are talking upon indifferent matters we are interrupted by the arrival of his Curate, who, with perfect respect, offers some wise and useful observation. The Curé, naturally quick and impulsive, takes the observation in bad part, and goes so far as to return an excessively rude answer. The Curate, offended at such treatment, gives word for word, and speedily turns his back upon us. Here am I, left alone with the Curé. If I am sufficiently intimate with him to speak openly, I shall not fail to say: "You have acted wrongly, my dear Curé. Your Curate made a very proper observation; his tone was perfectly gentle, and nothing on his part deserved the sharp reply you returned."

But if, when the conversation is over, the Curate meets me at the door of the parsonage, and says: "Well, now, you see what my Curé is. Could I have spoken more quietly? And what is the use of it? You saw how he received me. Does he not richly deserve that I should pay him in his own coin? What do you think of it all?" "What do I think, my friend? I think that you have been wrong and very wrong." "But did he not begin the attack?" "Yes, but it was you who ended it, and you ended badly, as he had begun badly; his want of gentleness did not authorize your want of respect. *He ought*, on his part, to have received your observation with politeness, and *you ought*, on your part, to have taken his sharp retort with patience and humility. Each of you had a *duty* to fulfil; and each of you have failed in this duty; you are both to blame, and the fault of the one cannot in any way justify the fault of the other."

If this Curé and this Curate are wise, if they possess good sense and clear comprehension, they will acknowledge the truth of my observation and will for the future watch with more care over the first impulse of their heart and the quickness of their tongue.

140. Let us now show what ought to be the behavior

of the Curate towards his Curé, in order that peace may reign between them, and that their ministry may be fruitful and profitable.

Our readers are aware that we consider it of the last importance that the priest, in whatever position he may be, should, from the beginning, endeavor to make a favorable impression on the minds of those from whom he derives his authority, and with whom he will be thrown in perpetual contact in the course of his ministry. Yes, we attach a very great importance to first impressions; and, in fact, we are taught by experience that first impressions are more often confirmed than obliterated. If a priest at the outset wins the esteem and affection of those with whom he is to live by his prepossessing and amiable manners, it is clear that by this opening he takes possession, so to say, of the hearts of those persons, and that they will be far more disposed to indulgence, (should he, unfortunately, need it at a later time,) than if he introduced himself by harsh and repulsive manners. This applies naturally and especially to a Curate upon his first interview with his Curé.

There are some who at this time keep no restraint whatever upon their behavior. These are generally the great talkers, such as to a strong smack of levity join an almost entire deficiency in tact and judgment. Such a Curate shows his weak side in the first words that he utters. Without any consideration or reserve, he will say what he is, what he thinks, what he purposes to do or not to do. He will give an exposition of his principles of theology, spiritual direction, pastoral administration, etc. He will find fault with certain usages, and approve others; he will speak much, and with the sententiousness of a professor. He will decide absolutely on anything and everything, will astonish the Curé and silence him by a string of such phrases as this: *in my opinion . . . for my own part*, forcing him to say to himself, that his Curate is a pedant, and, at best, but a poor creature.

Certainly a most vexatious first impression ! When will it be effaced ? God knows. But to what purpose is all this talking ? Why this exposition of principles ? Why these approvals, these censures, these bold decisions ? How can a man help seeing that, independently of the air of pedantry which this language betrays, he runs the risk of annoying his Curé from the first, by showing that there is already a difference of sentiment between the two on many and perhaps important points.

A Curate who is endowed with tact and judgment does not introduce himself thus. His bearing is modest and respectful ; he does not pour out a flood of useless words ; he speaks in moderation ; and every word is the index of kindness, sweetness, and a sincere desire for the greatest possible good in the parish under the direction of his Curé. He makes no profession of faith, no exposition of principles, etc. ; he confines himself to generalities, which admit of no disagreement, and avoids those practical matters upon which he might express unacceptable opinions. He feels his way cautiously, and, according to the vulgar expression, lets his Curé come out ; then, as he gathers his opinions and views, he adapts his own accordingly, passing lightly over such as he is unable to approve. In a word, he conducts himself in such a manner that, the conversation ended, the Curé is delighted, and says to his friends that he is much pleased with his Curate, and that, in all probability, they will suit each other wonderfully.

Here we have a first and favorable impression, and it is an impression of this kind that every Curate should endeavor to produce on the mind of his Curé at the first interview, if he is anxious to secure one of the chief elements of success in his future ministry.

141. If matters proceed thus, the Curate will already know something of his Curé. Nevertheless his endeavor must be to know him better still, and how is he to acquire that precious knowledge ? As he has acquired all other

knowledge—by study. Yes, he must study his Curé, and we should only waste time in stopping to prove the necessity of such study. It is very easy to perceive that a Curate making it his constant endeavor to avoid everything which is disagreeable to his Curé, and to please him in every possible way, should ascertain, on the one hand, his tastes and inclinations in order to conform to them; and, on the other, his weak side, and his little failings, so as to escape collision with him.*

To repeat this advice again: a conciliatory and zealous Curate must study his Curé; he should observe his tastes attentively before stating his own; for instance, suppose a Curé is fond of society, and when his work is over likes to spend an hour or two regularly at the houses of his respectable parishioners; now if a Curate, ignorant of the Curé's custom, says at once, that he does not like society, and that he cannot imagine how priests can pass in long and useless conversations the time they might turn to advantage in prayer and study, it is clear that he will vex his Curé, and that, unconsciously, he will at the outset sow a seed of antipathy which will endanger the peace of the future.

A Curate ought also to study the temper of his Curé; he ought to ascertain whether he is quick or gentle, whether he is weak or firm; whether he is grave or cheerful, and so for the rest; and he must carefully avoid disclosing the salient peculiarities of his own temper, until he has learned those of his superior. In fact, virtue, tact, politeness, and good breeding oblige us to modify our peculiarities, and this sometimes considerably, in a thousand instances, according to the dispositions of those

* When we say that a Curate should study his Curé's tastes, we should be sorry that any one should so abuse our words as to bring to this study, which ought to be founded upon the purest charity, a spirit of espionage and ill-nature. It must be evident that the object of our advice, on this point, is to avoid all disagreements, and to establish entire harmony at the parsonage.

in whose company we are; for is it not better to conceal these our peculiarities in silence from the beginning, and to leave those with whom we live ignorant that we do not look at everything in the same light with themselves?

A Curate, then, ought to study the habits, and even the fancies of his Curé, before displaying his own; not that a Curate need carry his amiability so far as to change his own habits when they are good, far less to adopt those of his Curé, if they are bad; but it is easy to see that the knowledge of the habits of the Curé may be an excellent guide to a Curate for the regulation of his conduct in a thousand circumstances.

That is what we mean by studying the temper of the Curé; this study we recommend to the Curate before disclosing what he is, what he thinks, what he approves, or what he blames. If he acts thus, the Curé will be pleased, peace and charity will reign in the parsonage, and the probable result will be a vast amount of good done in the parish.

142. A Curate must scrupulously avoid all occasions of offending his Curé, and this rule must be pushed as far as conscience will permit.

How God would be glorified if all Curates carried out this rule of conduct! We can never insist sufficiently upon the importance it is to a Curate that he should gain the esteem and affection of his superior. The fact is generally admitted; but in weighing the advantages, the peace and personal comfort that it brings are more thought of than the abundant fruits of salvation which may be anticipated.

It is impossible to say how many obstacles, direct or indirect, a Curé may raise in the path of the Curate who has failed in winning his confidence and affection. Without any positively bad intentions he will impede pious and useful works, which, if he loved and esteemed his Curate, he would promote to the best of his power.

It is so natural to disapprove of anything that is done by those whom we dislike! It is so natural to reject the propositions of a man who displeases us!

Let us repeat it, then, a Curate must scrupulously avoid all occasion of offending his Curé; and this rule must be pushed as far as conscience will permit.

143. Now can that Curate avoid offending his Curé, who, utterly infatuated with his own talents, and believing himself thoroughly enlightened by his own natural abilities, admits no counsellor but himself, and gives advice and decisions every instant upon points of administration which belong only to his Curé, or, at least, which cannot be adopted without his approbation? This pride, this peremptory and pushing behavior, this usurpation even of an authority to which he has no right, is it calculated to win the good graces of the Curé? Can it be supposed that he would look with a kindly eye upon this subversion of order, this attempt, as it were, to supersede the superiority implied in his title?

144. Can that Curate avoid offending his Curé who in this independent way thinks that he is at liberty, on his own judgment, to absent himself as he pleases, and preach wherever he may chance to be asked? Would it not be painful for the Curé to see his Curate absenting himself for a fortnight without leave or without any previous warning? Would it not be painful for this Curé to see his Curate preaching everywhere without once consulting him before he bound himself by a formal promise! And if this Curé should have made arrangements for a short journey, or have engaged to preach for a neighbor, and that such journey or such sermon should be fixed for the very time that his Curate has arranged for his journey his sermon, what must be the result of this conflict? Which of the two will stay at home? For clearly one or the other must do so. Evidently it should not be the Curé; and that for many reasons; but sometimes the principal and decisive reason will be

that he desires to give his Curate a lesson, and to show him the inconvenience attending the free and easy way in which he behaves.

Whatever the result, it is clear that such independence on the part of a Curate cannot but offend and annoy the Curé. This leads us to say, that a zealous Curate, who understands the value of a soul, and the little which may destroy it, will not only refrain from protracted absences, but will never even quit the parsonage without leaving instructions where he may be found, in case of any serious and sudden accident. This is the practice of every holy priest, and experience has more than once proved its wisdom.

145. And what shall we say of that lazy Curate (if there be any such) whom we find everywhere but at home? Will his frequent, useless, and interminable visits, his walks and excursions which have no particular object, his late entertainments and parties of pleasure, please a Curé whose habits are the exact opposite of these? What pain it must cause him to see his Curate taken up with follies and absurdities, and yet so slack in discharging the most important functions of his ministry! For he is fully aware that his Curate's whole life is in disorder. He knows the full extent of his negligence, with regard to catechisms, preaching, confession, visits to the sick, in fine, with regard to all his duties; he sees it, and grieves. If he hazards any observation, if he ventures as far as a reproach, either it is received with murmurs, or, it may be, promises are made only to be wrecked like so many others, against that mass of laziness which nothing can destroy.

What can the Curé do, but look forward to the day when he may be rid of this Curate, who is far more a burden and an incumbrance than a comfort and a support.

146. Another source of pain to the Curé would be the formal refusal on the part of the Curate to perform this

or that function, to undertake this or that ministerial duty when requested to do so. If to such a request the Curé obtains only the answer, "I am not obliged to do it, and I shall not do it," etc., what pain it must cause him! This want of readiness and good-will; this habit of helping in nothing except under absolute compulsion; this determination to do nothing troublesome or laborious, whenever it may be avoided; is not this enough, and more than enough, to produce the most serious discord, and often an open and notorious rupture?

147. Again, what if this ill-tempered Curate, on account of some imaginary or foolish grievance, shuts himself up in silence during the whole meal? His superior will ask: "What is the matter with him? What is he thinking about? What can he want? What will be the end of this foolery?" It must have an end, we know. God grant that the apostle's warning be followed, and that the sun go not down upon this ridiculous ill-temper.

Men must be blind not to see the evil of such conduct. May not one such scene alienate, and perhaps forever, the attachment and confidence of the Curé? Besides, it is easy to perceive that this state of feeling, one utterly to be deplored, offends God, scandalizes those parishioners who are aware of its existence, destroys the peace and happiness which the union of heart alone can produce, and renders the ministry lamentably barren.

148. Again, do not other Curates court popularity? We can hardly believe it; but if such be the case, things are likely to be taking the following course:

For instance, the Curé has adopted a certain practice, a certain principle of administration. He has thought fit to act in this or that way, and has in consequence excited discontent and murmuring in the parish; the Curate is cognizant of this disorder; what will he do? Will he quietly warn his Curé of the ill effects of his new measures; and waiting the result of this warning,

will he do all in his power to calm the spirit of agitation, and to justify and defend his superior?

This is precisely what a Curate ought to do, if he is truly a man of God and a holy priest. But if he court popularity his conduct will be entirely different. If the measure which shocks the parishioners had produced the contrary effect, if it had exactly met their wishes, this Curate would have been its most fervent advocate; perhaps he would have given out that he was delighted at having been the first to suggest the idea to the Curé. But if the measure produces the ill effects we have supposed, the Curate will lament with those who lament, murmur with those that murmur, criticise and blame with those who criticise and blame. Of course, his voice will not be the loudest in the parish; his lamentations, his murmurs, his criticisms, will always be expressed in lower tones; but it is not less true, that everybody will be aware that he disapproves the Curé's proceedings, and will place his name at the head of the opposing party, happy in their power of justifying by the adhesion of the Curate the taking up of arms against the Curé. What can be more painful to this Curé than such conduct on the part of one who ought to be his support, and who yet turns his back upon him at the very moment that he ought to give most special proof of devotion and fidelity.

Let not this Curate say, that if he stands up to defend the Curé he must share the dislike in which he is held, and lose the confidence which he himself now possesses. This apprehension is almost always unfounded. The mass of men are guided by a sense of justice and by sound judgment, which prevents them from blaming, and which even leads them to approve, at least in secret, the conduct of a Curate who, in such circumstances, stands firmly by his Curé. Everybody is aware that it is his duty, and no one finds fault with him for fulfilling it.

149. This, again, will be courting popularity, to pay visits frequently, and with evident pleasure, to persons who are never, or rarely, visited by the Curé. These persons, being always on bad terms with the latter, are enchanted to receive the Curate; and he, encouraged by his kind reception, repeats his visits to the great dissatisfaction of the Curé, who can only attribute this thoughtless conduct to an excessive desire of popularity.

The same desire will be evinced, if the Curate be quick to notice any censures that may be passed on his superior relative to the thousand little matters of direction, or anything else, and should affect an entirely different course of conduct, not so much because he really believes it the better, as because his object is to apprise the parishioners that the Curate is free from those faults which have rendered his Curé unpopular.

Again, the same motive may induce him to increase, as far as he possibly can, the number of his penitents. A Curate, animated by a right spirit, receives with simplicity the penitents whom God sends him.

If any of those who present themselves say that it is indifferent to them whether they confess to the Curé or to the Curate, he advises them to present themselves to the former, not only because it is desirable that a large number of penitents should testify that the chief pastor possesses the confidence of his sheep, but because, the Curate's stay being only temporary, there is always reason to fear that many of his penitents may abandon confession when he shall leave the parish.

If the new penitents say that they used to confess to the Curé, the Curate who does his duty and does not make popularity his great object inquires into their reasons for changing their director; if these motives are, either rejection on the Curé's part, or his excessive or disheartening severity, or an invincible repugnance on their part, or, with stronger reason, a timidity which prevents their confessing what must of necessity be de-

clared, he admits them without hesitation. But even in such a case, he proves by his caution that he is not prompted by the wish of increasing the number of his penitents; and that, above all, he desires that the larger number should look to the Curé as their director. The latter never fails to become acquainted with the truth, and his esteem and attachment for the Curate who gives him proofs of devotion equally in private as in public, and even in the minutest details, will be in proportion to his alienation from, and dislike to, a Curate who would lessen his authority, and deprive him of the confidence of his flock.

150. But if anything could complete the annoyance of the Curé, could grieve him, and sometimes even reduce him to the necessity of asking his superiors for another charge, it would be the unworthy conduct of the Curate, who blames him openly, and places himself at the head of the disaffected party.

We can never believe that a minister of Jesus Christ could be reduced to such straits. But should such a misfortune happen, we think that this would be likely to produce it.

The evil has, perhaps, commenced even before the Curé has arrived in the parish. The Curate, we will suppose (for once more, what we say is a supposition which may never be realized), has been already in office under the late Curé, now deceased, or removed elsewhere. Without saying it in so many words, he makes known his wish to succeed him. In consequence, the parishioners petition the Bishop to appoint to the parish one who knows it so well, and who, as the petitioners say, has served it as Curate with so much zeal and success. If the petitions are unsuccessful the petitioners and their protégé are discontented, and declare against the new Curé, whoever he may be. Hence, cabals, cliques, parties, and scandalous divisions. We say divisions, because there is never unity in disorder. The

Curate had his supporters, but he had his detractors also, for what priest has not? These detractors become supporters of the new Curé to a certainty; and thus we have a divided parish where it is impossible for either Curé or Curate to exercise a fruitful ministry.

We quote this cause of division as an example, but we might mention many others of the same kind. For instance, the indiscretion of the Curate, who, in the, sometimes sharp, discussions between the Curé and a portion of his flock, should, more or less directly, take the part of the latter. Or again, his irritation, when, finding himself rather too closely watched by the Curé, and unwilling to follow the example of his wise and edifying conduct, he confines his intercourse to the necessary times of meeting, and frequents a society where the Curé is often criticized. Or again, the thoughtlessness of the Curate, who betrays to the enemies of the Curé the oddities of his character, and the real or imaginary annoyances resulting to himself, thus feeding a lamentable opposition, which it ought to be his constant effort to remove. These different causes, and many others which we might point out in addition, would be likely to produce the divisions of which we have spoken.

Who can tell their disastrous effects in the parishes where they are kindled? Never, never could we comprehend the blindness, or rather, the sort of madness of a Curate who is coward enough to lend himself to these unworthy manœuvres.

Humanly speaking, what consolations can such conduct afford? For the sake of a few unreal demonstrations of attachment from certain parishioners, who, after all, despise him, he would encounter the censure of his superior, he would become a prey to a remorse which will rob him of all his inward peace; he would fall into disgrace with his Bishop, who will some day or other give him the proof by stopping his advancement.

But, examined in a spiritual light, what a position,

what a miserable position to be in! Rash judgments, slander, calumnies, enmities, hatred, injuries committed against the Curé by the partisans of the Curate, and against the Curate by the partisans of his superior; conversions delayed, and now, perhaps, never to be; a ministry void and blasted, who will not shudder at such calamities?

We implore every Curate who reads these lines to reflect that this frightful disorder may sometimes result from a slight imprudence, from a sin which hardly deserves the name, from the most venial among venial offences.

We must, therefore, have watchfulness, attentive watchfulness of self; entire devotion to the Curé; a firm resolve to defend him at all hazards, and to hold as little intercourse with his enemies as possible.

151. It is certainly a great thing on the part of a Curate to avoid everything which may offend his superior; this is almost always enough to win his affection; nevertheless, a Curate, full of the spirit of God, desirous of cementing even more closely his alliance with his Curé and of gaining the most abundant harvest of souls, does not confine himself to this. He not only scrupulously abstains from offending his superior, but even anticipates his wishes in every possible way.

For instance, he will be delighted to afford him an agreeable surprise by some act of kindness; he tries to relieve him of painful burdens, and rejoices at an opportunity of doing him any little service.

Without any effeminate or affected mannerism, but with a frank and open countenance, he knows how to say a pleasant word; if he sees him out of spirits, he tries to cheer him; if he sees him happy, he shares his joy; if he hears in the parish any advantageous news, or such as is of a nature to give him pleasure, he makes haste to communicate it; if he discovers a germ of discontent in the flock, he informs him of the discovery,

and generously and from the bottom of his heart unites his assistance to prevent the evil.

He regards it as a duty to consult him, as a child consults his father; and not only does he ask his advice on all points concerning the administration of the parish, which is necessary, but to give additional proof of his affectionate confidence, he consults him on points of conduct which refer only to his own particular province, and in cases where he might, in strictness, act independently.

He always speaks in his favor, and makes it universally known in the parish that to wound the Curé is to wound the Curate in his tenderest point. His line of conduct is so clearly laid down on this important matter, that he alone, of all the world, knows the little causes for complaint and vexation which the Curé perhaps has given him.

If occasionally he resolves to undertake any good work, or to have recourse to such or such a means of working more efficaciously for the salvation of souls, he first of all confers with the Curé, and is careful not to paralyze beforehand the operation of his zeal by any hasty or precipitous proceedings.

Lastly, everywhere and always he is the man of the Curé, everywhere and always he loves to prove to him that his affection is sincere, his devotion unalterable. Hence what agreement, what sweet harmony, what mutual happiness in affection, confidence, esteem, and delicate consideration!

How can we shut our eyes to the fact that this must be our course, in order to work efficaciously for the regeneration of a parish, and to save the souls for whom we are responsible before God.

CHAPTER III.

INTERCOURSE OF CURATES WITH EACH OTHER.

152. WE cannot leave this subject without speaking of the close intimacy which should exist between Curates of the same parish. The Curates of the same parish ought to consider themselves as brothers, and their chief as a father. Thus, a family feeling will grow up in the parsonage with all its sweet affection. And, indeed, are they not united by ties of brotherhood? They are brothers in that they are Christians; brothers in that they are priests; brothers in ecclesiastical order, as Curates; brothers in the equality of their powers, the identity of their functions, their dependence upon the same Curé, and their residence in the house of a common spiritual father; where can we find stronger, more venerable, or more sacred ties?

Happy the Curates who regarding themselves in this relationship of faith, by their holy life ennoble yet more those divine ties of brotherhood, proving daily that they are really worthy of the glorious fraternity which unites them.

153. One of the principal faults against which they have to watch and battle is jealousy, a most odious and contemptible vice, which injures him alone who cherishes it, and which never procures the least shade of consolation in return for the misery into which it plunges him.

Without doubt, a Curé ought to testify the same affection for each of his Curates; but a Curate ought not to scrutinize his conduct so narrowly and jealously as to persuade himself that this word, this act of regard, this mark of esteem, is actual proof that the object of it is more dear in his eyes, and possesses a larger share of his affection.

Jealousy only can prompt such thoughts. The same feelings, perhaps, were but yesterday suggested to your fellow Curate by the same vice. This miserable passion, which is but unrestrained pride, is continually hiding from us the regard and kindness of our superior towards us, and makes us take a false view of the most trifling demonstration of favor extended towards our colleagues.

To believe this jealous feeling, all the kindnesses of our superior are for others, all his coldness and dissatisfaction, for ourselves; and when we have once lent an ear to such insidious suggestions, when we have had the misfortune to persuade ourselves that we occupy but a very inferior place in the esteem of our common superior, we become sad, depressed, uneasy, and ready for stormy disputes; we are offended with ourselves, our superior, and our colleagues; so much so as to take offence at their kindness even, through which our jealousy bids us discern a mass of coldness and indifference; next, our labor becomes tedious, works of zeal find us cold, the duties of the ministry are a burden to us; finally, the Curé and the other Curates suffer in return, and suffer the more, because, in proportion as they try to heal the morbid imagination of their colleague, they increase his irritation instead of calming it.

Surely these reasons are enough to render every Curate watchful over himself, in order to prevent the intrusion into the heart of any one feeling which may seem to owe its origin to jealousy.

154. Nevertheless, as it may really happen that a Curé is so imprudent as to give to one of his Curates various marks of esteem and affection which he denies to the other, we cannot too strongly recommend the latter to resign himself quietly to his position.

After all, what would be the use of ill temper? Would it restore the esteem and affection of his superior? On the contrary, if he is already cold and unkind towards

him, it is clear he would be still more so, seeing him assume a gloomy, peevish, and ill-tempered air; and especially if he sets himself to prove, by dint of formal argument, that his superior is partial and unjustifiable in his preference. He will almost invariably fail to obtain from his Curé the avowal of the preference with which he is reproached. The Curé will only affirm, and most positively, that there is not the slightest foundation for his imaginary grievances, and, if really unconscious of the fault imputed to him, will be the more firmly convinced that his accuser is jealous, suspicious, touchy, and of an unbearable temper. Is this the way to gain the affection which is so much desired?

But if a frank and open Curé should here and there allow that he has a preference, he will never make the avowal without justifying himself with a long string of well-arranged facts, such as will exhibit in full relief, on the one hand, the good qualities and virtues of the Curate whom he prefers, and on the other, the shortcomings and mistakes of the complainant. Is this the way to win his affection? Is it not rather likely to raise a stormy discussion, the only effect of which will be to erect a new wall of division between two hearts already too little disposed to sympathy?

What must be done, then? Make an act of virtue an act of practical humility; call faith and reason to your aid. Be silent upon your real or imaginary troubles. Speak of them only to God that you may offer them to Him; admit that you may possibly be blinded by self-love, and that the suspected preference which grieves you may perhaps exist only in your own deceived and sensitive imagination; remembering, after all, that the best method of recovering the affection of the Curé lies in increased gentleness, amiability, and delicate consideration, and in more active watchfulness against the caprices and imperfections of your own character.

Never forget that it is not in human nature that a

superior should feel any great affection for an inferior who uses all his logic to prove him in fault. No; it is not in man's nature that a superior should say, "My subordinate is a most agreeable fellow; every day he begins an argument to prove to me that I am in the wrong."

155. A Curate must be very careful to repress his feelings when he hears any parishioner exalting the talents, virtues, and the general good qualities of his colleague. If he permit jealousy to enter his heart he will soon think that his fellow-Curate is held in higher esteem, that he is more liked, and inspires greater confidence. He then feels dispirited, vexed, and discouraged, perhaps cool towards his colleague, who will naturally be alienated from one who exhibits but indifference towards him, without caring to give his reasons; these reasons, indeed, being too discreditable to admit of explanation.

Here, again, he ought to summon reason and faith to his aid. Reason, for if consulted, it will tell him at once that he need not be surprised at hearing the praises bestowed upon his absent colleague, since his absence permits the praise to be given without injury to his modesty; while it would be contrary to good manners to praise a man, and especially a priest, to his face, inasmuch as we give him credit, without proof to the contrary, for sufficient humility to refuse praise rather than to seek it. Reason, again, will tell him that despondency and sullenness will not change public opinion, supposing it to be such as his susceptibility imagines it, and that thus he only brings upon himself a real, in addition to an imaginary evil. Lastly, reason will teach him that, after all, if his brother Curate is preferred to himself, such preference is due to his virtues, and that it would be better to endeavor to imitate the qualities which win for him the esteem and affection of the people, than to regard him with cold and unfriendly looks, without a shadow of reason.

But faith, especially faith which ought to speak so forcibly to the mind and heart of the priest, will tell him that thus to covet empty praise is seeking his own, not the things of Christ Jesus. It will tell him that these are not the precepts of humility, that virtue so dear to Jesus, which He preached during His whole life, and which we continue to preach after Him. It will tell him that it matters little whether we are praised or blamed, provided God be glorified, and souls saved. It will tell him that praise is always dangerous, and that criticism and blame are harmless to one whom God loves and approves. It will tell him that, according to the principles of the Gospel, humiliations outweigh a thousand times the praise of men; that Jesus Christ chose them as His own lot, that He was voluntarily loaded with them, that He lived only to render His humiliation daily more profound, that He annihilated himself to take the degraded form of a slave? that, in short, He prolonged His state of humiliation to His last sigh, that is, until He awoke in glory.

Such are the ideas inspired by faith, such the feelings which faith implants in the heart of a priest who loves nothing but God, and seeks only to please Him, and to win souls to Him.

156. A Curate ought not only to avoid all that is painful to his colleagues, he should endeavor also to please them by his gentleness, amiability, and courtesy. Indeed, nothing is more edifying than to see the Curates of the same parish harmoniously united, and mutually rendering each other all sorts of kind offices. In how many circumstances throughout their ministry have they not need one of another?

To do even more than a fellow-Curate desires with readiness and affectionate kindness; to relieve him of a painful burden, or, at least, to make him the offer, will often be enough to cement an alliance which will endure perhaps through life.

157. It is equally edifying to see the Curates of the

same parish happy in each other's company, and choosing that society in preference to any other.

When we see Curates sharing together any of their pious exercises; when we see them walking together about the parish, when we can judge that, though their dispositions are different, yet perfect harmony exists between them; when we see the one always ready to take the part of the other when censured, or to echo his praises with heartiness; when we are assured by the whole tenor of their intimacy that a sincere friendship unites them, and that, moreover, this same chain of friendship attaches them to their Curé; then there exists in that parish such a lasting example of charity, peace, and concord, as marvellously furthers every work of zeal, and draws down the blessings of heaven upon pastors and flock.

158. Again, it is an excellent practice for Curates of the same parish to agree upon a mutual communication of every thing, the knowledge of which is important for the spiritual advantage of each, as well as for the general benefit of the souls of their parishioners.

How many things come to the ears of a Curate through his fellow-priest, that he would never suspect, had not an affectionate kindness informed him of them. For instance, some practice which, although adopted with the best intention, is disliked by many; a want of consideration or gentleness under peculiar circumstances; an intimacy not bad, but liable to be commented upon; a levity in word or manner, which malicious tongues exaggerate in order to feed their ill-nature. Here are matters enough, without speaking of many others, which might never be learned in a lifetime except through the information of a friend, although most important to be known.

159. The mutually provoking one another to good works by pious conversations is, again, an excellent practice. There are some Curates full of ardor and zeal

for the salvation of souls, whose greatest pleasure is to make known to others the pious artifices which God has taught them for the conversion of sinners.

With the consent of their Curé, who ought to be at the head of every work, they are always planning new means of doing the greatest possible good in the parish. This is the ordinary topic of all their conversation, and the object of all their efforts. Always busy, they scatter around the treasures of charity. They preach Jesus Christ, "*publice et per domos*;" they concert their plans, plant their batteries, seek out the information necessary for laying regular siege to the hardened soul of such and such an old sinner, in whose conversion they feel all the more interest in proportion as his conversion is likely to be followed by that of many others, over whom he perhaps exercises great influence.

This is the idea they have conceived of the obligation of their holy ministry; this is their interpretation of the priesthood, thus they answer to the mighty vow of their MASTER: *Ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo, nisi ut accendatur.*

CHAPTER IV.

INTERCOURSE WITH PRIESTS RESIDENT IN THE PARISH.

160. IN many parishes, and especially in towns, are to be found priests not belonging to any parish. They are ecclesiastics advanced in age, or incapacitated, although young, from the full exercise of their ministry on account of ill-health. Occasionally, too, they are priests who have been forbidden by their Bishop to officiate for a time, on account of some irregularity in their conduct.

Among such priests there are, of course, some highly respectable men, capable of rendering the greatest ser-

vice in the parishes where they reside, but it must be confessed that there are others whose lives are far from edifying. These are ordinarily lazy, selfish, backbiters, jesters, newsmongers, sowers of discord, etc. We at once comprehend the evil that such priests may work in a parish, and the importance of keeping a careful eye upon them, lest they injure both the shepherd and the flock.

161. The Curé cannot be too kind and considerate to such priests, when they are really good, and when the lustre of their virtues and the regularity of their conduct contributes to edify the parish. He should assign to them their appropriate place in the choir, according to the diocesan statutes and rules of precedence. He should invite them to officiate from time to time, on great festivals, requesting them to preach, if they acquit themselves satisfactorily in that branch of the ministry, and be ready with a friendly greeting when he meets them. It will be well, also, to invite them from time to time to dinner at the parsonage. All this kind attention, respect, and politeness is sure to be agreeable, and attaches them to the Curé, whose zeal they assist by the energy with which they endeavor to render themselves useful as circumstances allow.

Again, it might be very useful to offer a confessional to such priests whose character is blameless, in order that those who wish may put themselves under their direction. In this way a Curé will find in these worthy ecclesiastics useful and devoted auxiliaries, who will contribute valuable aid to the success of his ministry.

162. It will often happen that these good unattached priests will become acquainted with much which concerns the state of the parish and the feelings of the parishioners, and which, although of the highest importance, is unknown to the Curé. It would, therefore, be advisable that he should occasionally ask them for information on these points. Timidity, an excess of po-

liteness, and sometimes the well-known susceptibility of the Curé, prevents them from volunteering warnings or advice, which might be of the greatest use. It will, therefore, be well that he should take the initiative in asking their advice.

By a courteous application to these worthy ecclesiastics, couched in the tones of zeal, he will often ascertain all that is said in the parish respecting his ministry; the censures passed, either upon himself or his Curates, or the officers attached to his church; the abuses which should be removed, and, on the other hand, the happy innovations which are desired; the branches of the ministry which are in any way neglected, and a thousand other matters which a Curé could never ascertain unaided, and the knowledge of which is nevertheless of the highest importance.

163. Again, the Curé should act with the utmost kindness even towards those resident priests who cannot merit the title of *good priests*. Such stand in need, great need, of advice; and who will give it them, if the Curé in whose parish they have taken up their residence declines to do so? To give advice, however, is not sufficient to recall the wanderer to his duty; the main point is to make them love and follow this advice; and the only way to ensure such a result is to gain their affection by a winning amiability, a paternal charity, and by frank and sincere proofs of heartfelt interest. If received thus, the priests of whom we speak, even were they not influenced by the fear of God, would often be restrained, through the fear of displeasing their kind pastor, from anything which might cause scandal in the eyes of the parishioners.

Now, how far is the parish priest to allow them to exercise the public functions of divine service? This is often a very delicate point. One priest, for instance, has behaved so that he cannot preach the Word of God without painfully affecting the flock by the simple fact

of his presence in the pulpit. Another has given such grave scandal that the parishioners would be shocked to see him exercise any public functions whatever in the church.

In such sad circumstances it seems to us that the course of the Curé is clear. He must inform his Bishop faithfully of all the facts. He must expressly mention the state of public opinion with regard to the priest in question, and wait for such instructions as the Bishop may think fit to transmit. On receipt of these he should seek an interview with the priest, and lay everything frankly before him, giving him, at the same time, fresh marks of good-will, interest, and affection. In this way he may reconcile the requirements of religion and friendship.

164. If, which God forbid! the resident priest of whom we have spoken should, unfortunately, commit any grave offence, which comes to the knowledge of the Curé, the latter has then new duties to fulfil; and here again, as always, his zeal must be tempered with charity. When once assured of the truth of the charge, he must request a private interview with the guilty party; and after having drawn from him a confession of his sin by gentleness and love, he will employ the most pressing exhortations of zeal to induce him to amend; adding, nevertheless, however painful it may be to speak the words, that a repetition of the fault will oblige him to bring the matter before the Bishop.

165. Perseverance in this course will, it may be, occasionally fail to afford the happy results we desire, but at least we may rest calmly in the blessed thought that we have faithfully obeyed the dictates of zeal and charity.

Now, we could not feel thus, if, for example, we received these priests with coldness and disdain; if we showed them no sign of interest or regard, either in word or action; if we everywhere expressed our regret at seeing them take up their residence in our parish; if we

employed subterfuge, duplicity, and a thousand scheming tricks to injure their reputation in the esteem of their superiors; or if we permitted ourselves to mortify them directly by cutting words, or indirectly by insinuations manifestly disgraceful.

It is evident that such conduct, so little remarkable for zeal and charity, can only exasperate the priest against whom it is directed, and not only will he be the less disposed to amend, but perhaps will plunge deeper and deeper into the abyss, drawing from the unkindness with which he is treated some shadow of pretext for railing against the Curé who has shown him such ill-will.

166. In giving this advice, we are far from recommending the Curé in any way to make advances to these persons to induce them to take up their residence in his parish.

Sometimes kindness is carried too far in this direction. The desire of adding to the number of the clergy officiating in the Church, and of procuring the advantage of additional masses for the parishioners, leads to the ready reception of disgraced clergy, who, knowing the excessive good-nature of the Curé, and his anxiety to have them about him, are ready enough to ask a hospitality, which he often regrets too late. Let us be upon our guard, therefore, and carry nothing, not even our charity, too far.

With these not over-respectable priests, who on that very account have no employment, let the rule be to admit none who can be excluded, to invite none under any circumstances, in some cases even to oppose, as far as possible, their entrance into the parish; prudence and wisdom teach us this; but, once admitted, to undertake the conquest of their soul by all the means that charity can suggest; to win them by force of good-will, gentleness, and interest; this is the course to be adopted by those who would draw their inspiration from a true zeal.

CHAPTER V.

INTERCOURSE WITH THE NEIGHBORING CLERGY.

167. A PRIEST employed in the holy ministry can and ought to seize every opportunity of furthering his efforts, and of more and more assuring the success of his labors. He will be far from regarding the esteem and affection of his brother pastors, and more particularly of those who live in the immediate neighborhood, as ineffective towards the well-being of his flock.

Some give way to a blamable excess in this respect. Living in the seclusion of their parsonage, like a religious in his cell, they have no more intercourse with their brother clergy than is strictly necessary and unavoidable. Never do any kind attentions pass; never any offers of assistance; never any marks of affection; never the least sign of friendly and kindly fellowship.

What happens in consequence? That, in many circumstances, either on account of illness, or of a journey which he is compelled to undertake, he dares not have recourse to the kind offices of a brother to supply his place, or, if he does apply to him, he experiences the pain of a refusal. Indeed, we must expect that few people will be disposed to help us, if we ourselves do nothing to oblige others.

It is, however, with regard to preaching that serious inconveniences result from the conduct which we now censure. Undoubtedly, it is the pastor of the parish who ought habitually to break the bread of the Word to his flock; nevertheless, it is desirable that, every now and then, he should interrupt the monotony of his ordinary instructions, and procure for his parish the pleasure of hearing a strange voice; it will be convenient to do

this on the occasion of some great solemnity, when a simple instruction or sermon would be out of place.

When he has maintained a cordial intimacy with his brethren, nothing is more easy than to follow our advice. Mutual service is rendered in this respect as in every other; and an exchange of sermons is made which tends to the general edification and to the greater glory of God. But if, on the contrary, a priest will absolutely and entirely depend upon himself, then he wearies his flock, who get tired of hearing the same voice incessantly; he is supposed to be on bad terms with his brethren; and he places himself in an exceptional state, which is obvious to everybody, by the comparison which is made between the state of things in the neighboring parishes, and that in the parish of the solitary Curé of whom we are speaking.

168. The happy concord and the peaceful harmony which we have just recommended is often injured by an excessive yearning for solitude, which becomes sometimes complete cynicism and a condition of thorough disquietude and uneasiness when a man is obliged to step out of his ordinary routine, and undergo the trouble of some disarrangement.

This disposition is certainly blamable. It is vain to endeavor to excuse it by exalting the advantages of a solitary and meditative life; it is vain to praise the justice and depth of these words from the Imitation, "*As often as I have been among men, I have returned home less a man than I was before;*" it is not less true that we are wrong in secluding ourselves when the greater glory of God demands that we should be in the world; and, in the present case, it is incontestable that the glory of God, the salvation of souls and, more particularly, the general good of the parish demand that we should maintain such friendly intercourse with our neighboring brethren as will enable us to have recourse to them with confidence when we shall have need of their services.

169. Another thing which checks the kind friendship which we desire should be maintained with the neighboring clergy, is a certain coldness, an old root of bitterness occasioned by some disagreement, want of respect, or other reasons often futile and pitiable.

What we said in the first part of this work, in the chapter "*On Charity*," renders it unnecessary that we should enter into new details. We will only say that if we will weigh in the balance of the sanctuary, and as if we were ready to appear before the tribunal of God, on one side, the frivolous motives which we think justify us in not visiting a neighboring brother, and in habitually regarding him with coldness and indifference, and on the other, the advantages which would result from the opposite course for the glory of God, the edification of the people, and the good of the parish which we govern, we shall hardly believe that we can have remained so long in a state which can procure no advantage, and which produces almost always grave inconveniences.

170. Jealousy may also be a cause of coldness and isolation. We take care not to admit this motive to any one. Alas! we do not admit it to ourselves, so blind are we! However, it is unhappily only too true that, without our perceiving it, it is this vice which frequently produces the bad effect here pointed out.

A Curé, for example, cannot suffer a single parishioner to choose as his director any other confessor than himself; it is, with him, a settled principle which he thinks good, and even excellent. Full of this idea, he explains it sufficiently clearly in private, sometimes in public also.

However, he has some parishioners, who, upon this point, do not allow themselves to be convinced. Naturally timid, they feel that they should never have the courage to tell their own pastor of some heinous sin which they have had the weakness to commit in a fit of violent passion, and not only do they believe that they are not doing wrong, but they even persuade themselves

that they are acting very prudently, in choosing a stranger for their director. He, evidently approving of a step so well justified, receives them without hesitation. The pastor of these wandering sheep soon learns they have fled from his crook, and then he is cold and displeased both with the fugitive sheep and with the neighboring pastor who has received them so kindly.

171. Interest, not to say avarice, is another obstacle to the intercourse of kind friendship which we should wish to see existing between brother priests.

To receive one or two brethren at his table, however plain it may be, is an expense; and the simple thought of expense would scare a priest over whom avarice predominated; rather than sacrifice a little of the superfluity which he possesses he would remain for whole years alone, quite alone; isolated from his brethren, he would deprive himself of the important services, which they might be able to render him; and if many other circumstances occur to corroborate this, he must draw upon himself the scandalous reputation of an avaricious priest, which will ruin his ministry, and paralyze beforehand the works of zeal that he might now and then have the feeble desire to undertake.

It is thus that, not wishing to incur a slight expense, he would deprive himself of the undoubted advantages of a brotherly friendship. We say "*a slight expense*," for we should be grieved if our words should be taken as an authority for his running into the opposite extreme, by giving frequently, and to very many guests, those entertainments in which the rareness of the wines, the abundance of the dishes, and the splendor of the table cause a real scandal, which grieves pious souls, causing the poor to murmur, and the wicked to brand with their sarcasms both religion and its ministers. In our opinion, what is called *a grand dinner*, ought to be extremely rare on the part of a priest; in these grand dinners even, he should remember the primitive simplicity which we cannot too

deeply regret. But, from time to time, he would do well to invite, now one brother priest, now another, without any ceremony, in just such a way as to keep up the courtesies of that friendly intimacy which we have been praising, and which is indeed fruitful in advantages of more than one kind.

CHAPTER VI.

INTERCOURSE OF THE PRIEST WITH HIS SERVANT.

172. THE title of this chapter will perhaps, at first sight, surprise more than one reader; but we think that a moment's reflection will suffice to convince them that a few words upon what has been to many priests the occasion of much trouble, and sometimes the cause of the little success in their ministry, will not be useless. The first duty of an ecclesiastic on the subject which now occupies us is to conform exactly to the diocesan statutes respecting the age of the servant whom he chooses. Often, ecclesiastical penalties are attached to the infringement of these statutes, and these penalties are sometimes so serious that at first suspension, afterwards *irregularity*, may overtake the infringer of the law, which would be infinitely to be regretted.

Never, therefore, employ any artifice, duplicity, subterfuge, or miserable pretext to obtain the dispensation which we so ardently desire, but to which we know very well that we cannot legitimately lay claim.

173. The diocesan statutes scrupulously observed, it remains to make a good choice amongst the different persons who offer their services.

We say boldly that this choice is of the highest importance. In fact, if the servant who presents herself has a light tongue; if she has no discretion; if she likes

to hear news in order that she may have the pleasure of retailing it; if she wastes in long and useless conversations the time which ought to be employed in her master's service; if she is naturally given to exaggerate and to blacken the motives of those whose faults she is publishing; if, lastly, she is heedless, talkative, and slanderous, can we think without shuddering of the mischief she will do in a priest's house, if he has the imprudence to take her into his service?

In case he happens to displease her on any point, or in case he gives her a firm, perhaps even a severe reprimand, this is enough to set her, feeling herself deeply wounded, to speak against him in no measured terms, full sometimes even of malicious exaggerations. From thence arises, of course, an evil more or less considerable, but always very vexatious, and of a nature to diminish in the flock the esteem and respect which they have for their pastor.

174. If the servant is brusque in her manner, hasty and impertinent in her answers, haughty, sharp, and imperious in her behavior and conversation; if she is rude in receiving the people who come to ask for her master; if she sends them off with a consequential and authoritative air, without even caring to hear a word of explanation, she will make herself detested, it is very true; but will she will fall alone under the public anathema? Will the public have sufficient charity to believe that he who has authority over the servant can be altogether ignorant of a fault so generally known, and so easy to discover? And if the public does not extend its charity to this point, will it not make the master responsible for the fault which he tolerates in his servant to the great dissatisfaction of all those who visit him? Will it not say that his weakness and indulgence passes all bounds; that he gives up his superiority in favor of her who ought to be the first to recognize and respect it; and that, consequently, the master loses in respect and esteem what the servant gains in usurped power?

When a woman of this character is fixed in the house of a priest, many people are afraid to approach him; and, although they often require good advice on important matters, they refrain from asking it, from fear of being rudely received by the servant. But, what is more deplorable still, she will sometimes receive with her usual sharpness and impertinence even those who come to fetch her master to the sick and dying.

To expose such conduct it is sufficient to say how reprehensible it is, and how carefully a priest, and particularly a Curé, ought to watch that his servant should always receive with kindness and courtesy all who inquire for him.

175. Other servants are upon such a footing of equality with the priest whom they serve as wounds decorum, and certainly is not edifying to the people. They speak to him with a freedom which painfully affects bystanders; and the voice which commands is not always that of the superior. They arrange, they give orders, they decide on their own authority, without troubling themselves the least in the world as to whether their decisions will be ratified or not by him who alone ought to decide.

Everybody laments such conduct, everybody speaks of it, and mourns over it. The master himself, become a slave and a little child, laments like the rest; but he restrains his lamentations from fear of wounding and irritating her who provokes them, aggravating, by such misplaced laxity, an evil already too considerable, and attended with consequences far more sad than he imagines.

And what shall we say of those who not only do that which we have just stated, but who, as we ourselves have been grieved to see, admit their servant to their own table? Until our public manners have undergone a considerable change on this point, it is certain that every prudent man will consider that it is pushing equality too far to raise a servant to the rank of a guest. Let us

speak out; all this contributes to tarnish the halo of respect and veneration which should always encircle the minister of JESUS CHRIST.

176. There is another imprudence which may be followed by very serious results. Some priests, ordinarily taking their meals in their kitchen, and sitting there, either with their Curate, or with a brother priest, allow themselves to talk without any precaution of matters which prudence would have discussed in secret. Under pretence that the servant is discreet, and that, besides, she pays no attention to the conversation, occupied as she is with her own work, they slightly lower the tone of their conversation, and then speak freely and without any constraint of a thousand things which she picks up with an avidity perfidiously concealed under an appearance of simplicity and good-nature.

Oh! what important secrets have been disclosed in this manner, without a suspicion of the means by which the public have become acquainted with them! We are not sufficiently aware how much a priest's servant loves to show to her intimate friends that she is initiated into the secret details of the administration of the parish.

177. Again, a servant, light in her conversation, in her manners, in her dress, and in her general conduct, is extremely misplaced in the house of a priest. Everything that surrounds the priest ought to reflect the austere gravity of his manners, and if he tolerates in his own house a lightness of behavior which gives a handle to malicious remarks, that very malice will not fail to attack him in his turn. If he recommends in the pulpit that beautiful simplicity, that exquisite bashfulness, that modesty which is so edifying, and which is universally acknowledged to be the most noble ornament of woman; what will be thought, and what will be said, of the preacher who takes for his servant a person of so little quietness and modesty?

To permit at his own house abuses against which he

thunders in the church, is this the way to conciliate the respect and esteem of his people? In such circumstances can preaching of this nature carry conviction to the soul? Some hearers, following out certain associations of ideas which present themselves spontaneously, cannot help repeating in an audible whisper, the famous *Medice, cura te ipsum*, of the Gospel. Oh! how blameless must we be, in order to announce with independence and authority from the Christian pulpit the severe truths of which JESUS CHRIST has constituted us the teachers.

178. We shall again advise every priest, more particularly if he be a Curé, not to choose for a servant a woman of bad temper. We see some who are excessively touchy, or invincibly self-willed, or of a coarse violence which breaks out on the least occasion. Others answer again, are peevish, sulky, etc. Now it is certain that the scenes which these defects of character daily occasion, must banish domestic peace, and prevent the enjoyment of that calm and tranquillity which are more necessary than men think, for the fulfilment of the functions of the holy ministry with a godly zeal.

If it were possible to rid one's self entirely of the cares of housekeeping, and to free one's self from the petty details required by the maintenance of a house and intercourse with servants, assuredly works of zeal would gain much by it; and this is why priests who belong to religious societies, and have nothing to do with material cares, work for the salvation of souls with that liberty, that freedom, and that independence which so powerfully contribute to the success of their apostleship.

But since the priest employed in the holy ministry cannot, as ordinarily situated, free himself from these domestic burdens, he ought at least, if his zeal is condemned to wear fetters, to apply himself to render them as light as possible; he ought to keep his soul in an habitual state of peace and contentment, and to suppress, as much as depends upon himself, whatever might be of a nature

to divert him painfully from the road in which his august functions employ him.

179. As a summary of the various details into which we have just entered, we will say that the servant of a priest should be grave, modest, steadfastly pious, and of a good temper. She ought to have a fund of politeness and affability, manifesting itself in her dealings with all who come to the parsonage. She ought to be invariably respectful and reserved towards her master, and all the priests whose visits he receives. She ought to avoid with the greatest care all persons who are known to have a character for collecting and retailing news, finding herself her pleasantest occupation in the affairs of her household. She ought to avoid all levity, joking, and familiarity, whenever in the least degree ill-timed; and to prove, by the regularity of her conduct, and the depth of her piety, that she profits by the lessons of virtue which her master teaches her.

CHAPTER VII.

INTERCOURSE WITH THE SCHOOLMASTER AND SCHOOL- MISTRESS OF THE PARISH, AND WITH THEIR PUPILS.

180. It is a truth which we are unhappily compelled to acknowledge, that in many dioceses, and in a multitude of parishes, faith is so weakened, if not extinguished; morality so disordered, if not utterly ruined and corrupted; that the only hope of spiritual regeneration lies in the children of our schools, who, as yet too young to know sin, may with good training make virtue their choice, and at a later period dethrone the threatening spirit of impiety.

A zealous pastor should be well convinced of this truth. He should regard the rising generation as the chosen

portion of his flock, and use every endeavor to procure them a thoroughly Christian education. And the better to effect this important result, regular and careful catechising is an excellent means, although too often far from being sufficient.

How often, indeed, do children, after listening to the word of God at church, hear immediately afterwards in the world, and perhaps in the schoolroom itself, lessons of impiety!

Nothing, in truth, is more important for a Curé, than to keep his eye continually upon the schools of the parish, in order to make sure that the schoolmaster does not pull down in the souls of his scholars that spiritual edifice which the pastor strives to build up.

181. To obtain a happy result in this important matter the zealous and prudent Curé will see at once that it is necessary to maintain a kind and amiable intercourse with the schoolmaster. If complete harmony exists between them, wonderful fruits of salvation will infallibly result from this mutual sympathy; and even, should the schoolmaster not be a strictly religious man, the fear of displeasing a Curé who shows him so much kindness, will keep him in a state of habitual vigilance, and prevent his doing or saying anything contrary to faith or morality.

But if, on the contrary, the Cure, being a hot and fidgety man, and thinking himself zealous, while he is only imprudent, catching at the first word he may hear against the schoolmaster, begins to rail against him, and to represent him as an irreligious and immoral character, the regular pest of the parish, and openly uses all available means to obtain his dismissal; if he abstains from paying a single visit to the school throughout the whole year; if he systematically avoids meeting him, and, in a word, gives out that war is declared between the school and the parsonage; who can tell the evil that this deplorable disunion will produce? The schoolmaster, if he is

already bad, will become still worse, and to annoy the Curé will do all the mischief he can without incurring dismissal.

Poor children! What will be their fate in the midst of these combats? Will the schoolmaster, who has them constantly under his hand, teach them by his lessons and example to respect their pastor? And can the pastor regain, in one or two hours of catechising once a week, the ground that the schoolmaster makes him lose with the children by the influence he exercises over them during entire weeks?

182. We may conclude then, that the principal care of a good Curé, in this most important matter, is to employ all the means in his power to gain the affection of the schoolmaster of the parish.

To obtain so desirable an end, let him have recourse to all the means that a prudent and enlightened zeal will suggest to him, if it is in the practice of this zeal that he draws his inspirations. He arrives in the parish, knowing beforehand that the schoolmaster leaves much to be desired as regards the government and tone of his school. He should at first appear ignorant of the evil which he already laments; he should dissemble his anxiety, and pay a friendly and cordial visit to the schoolmaster; he should show him that he desires to maintain a kind and affectionate intercourse, such as will be for the happiness of both; he should show him honor by an invitation to the parsonage; he should speak in his praise throughout the parish, enlarging upon his good qualities and extenuating his faults; by this course he will often succeed in attaching the schoolmaster to him forever; sometimes even in converting him, should he require conversion.

Later, when friendship shall be firmly established, when he will no longer fear to see it shaken by remarks, representations, and advice, he may come to the point, if necessary; and the way being thus prepared, advice will be favorably received, which before the preliminaries of

conciliation just mentioned would have been heard with contempt and disdain.

183. We have only this moment said that this kind course, which we so earnestly recommend, will sometimes be the means of the schoolmaster's conversion, if, as is, alas, the case too frequently, he has need of conversion.

We will make an observation with reference to this to which we attach great importance. We think that the first duty of a Curé animated by true zeal is to labor especially for the conversion of such of his parishioners as afflict him most by their opposition, and the scandal they cause. We have already recommended this in speaking of the clergy resident in the parish, when their behavior is irreligious, and we believe we must pursue the same course with the schoolmaster, and generally with all those influential parishioners who use that influence only for the ruin of souls.

Unhappily, some Curés act differently. They lay down the principle that such and such persons are incorrigible; that they are thoroughly hardened and vicious; that all means of conciliation are inevitably useless, and that the only course is to diminish, as much as possible, the influence of those bad parishioners by exposing their real character; this never fails to signally aggravate the evil, and even to render it frequently incurable. I have often asked myself by what right we poor sinners, who were perhaps brands snatched from the burning by the zeal of some charitable pastor, dare to limit the almighty operation of Divine mercy, and to consider as already judged, and condemned, those with whom God does not cease to be long-suffering, although they do not cease to outrage him.

Missionary priests, in the course of their rounds, occasionally find certain Curés animated by these sentiments, who at the commencement of the mission will point to three or four libertines or ungodly persons, upon whose

conversion they dare not reckon. Nay, more, the manner of speaking of them shows how highly they would disapprove if any missionary were to admit them to participation in the sacraments; all this, because they regard them as incorrigible in the strict force of the expression; and, in fact, when what they pronounced impossible arrives, when a miracle of grace brings the new Lazarus out of the grave of corruption, when he proclaims like the others, and often more vehemently than the others, the joy of his heart by abundant tears and by ardent aspirations, everybody, in rejoicing over the sinner, is comforted and edified. The Curé alone, prophetic of ill, refrains from sharing in the common joy, and accuses the missionary as too indulgent in according absolution to one who, he says, will soon announce by new scandal that his pretended conversion is an imposture. What evils are thus produced without one pang of self-reproach by this spirit in the parish priest! He has zeal, no doubt; but is it the zeal of Jesus?

To return to our schoolmaster. His conversion must be taken in hand with serious and fervent zeal. And this, not only because he is, after all, one of the flock, and because his soul will be required at the pastor's hand; but the more especially because his conversion, if accomplished, will be fruitful in happy results, and perhaps in the designs of God such conversion is destined to effect the spiritual regeneration of the whole parish.

After all, what is there to apprehend in following this course? Is it not evident that charity, zeal, nay, more, conscience itself, traces the same line of conduct? Is it more charitable, more Christian, more apostolic, more edifying, more advantageous to religion, to declare war against a man who has weight in the parish, who holds in his hand the growing generation, who, through the children, exercises a vast influence over their parents, and who can consequently produce incalculable evil, if,

sick of the annoyances and provocations of the Curé, he finishes by following the guidance of his own bad passions and the evil spirit?

184. "I have done all you advise," will perhaps be the answer of some pastor animated by the spirit of God; "I have done all this, and even more, if it be possible, and in truth I do not repent; nevertheless, I must acknowledge that I have not obtained the results I anticipated from the persevering efforts of my zeal. I know that some of my brother clergy have by the same course completely succeeded, but unhappily for me, the schoolmaster of my parish is invariably a veritable pest. Licentiousness and ungodliness have taken possession of his heart, and I confess I would, at the price of all I hold most dear, withdraw the sheep confided to my care from the contagion of his teaching and example."

Euge, serve bone et fidelis! Courage, courage, good and faithful servant of God. Never repent of having exhausted all the means of gentleness, of conciliation, of kindness, that the purest charity has suggested. Our Divine Master has taken into account all your good words, all your generous endeavors, all your holy thoughts, as well as all the deep sighs that zeal has wrung from you; soon, perhaps, He will reward you with the realization of your ardent desires.

You have then, in your schoolmaster, a kind of ravenging wolf, who pulls down what you build up, and whose ravages you are totally incapable of opposing. If things are thus, nothing assuredly prevents you from doing all in your power to drive the wolf from the fold. But by what means to arrive at this end? Unhappily, it is no easy matter.

Our first advice in such a case is, not to give any public signal of the struggle. Your outward relations should continue to be kind and courteous. But it were well to ascertain whether the superior authorities on whom the schoolmaster immediately depends are favorable to re-

ligion, and whether, were you to inform them of doings of this nature, they would use their power to urge the dismissal, or at least the removal, of immoral schoolmasters.

Now, more than ever, the university rectors are invested with full power over the teachers; we may therefore address them with hope of success. Sometimes, even, it may be sufficient to apply to their subordinate officers, who, according to the existing organization of this administration, are distributed in the chief town of each district. These subordinates would refer to the recteurs, and the whole affair would be settled without the Curé appearing in the matter, which it is always desirable to avoid.

In conclusion, when, in such grave circumstances, any complication arises, we advise the Curé to represent everything faithfully to his Bishop, requesting him to use his high influence towards the desired end, or at least to give his instructions as to the best course to be adopted, if the Prelate thinks it desirable not to interfere personally.

185. From these painful extremities, to which the parish priest is sometimes reduced, we may perceive the importance of maintaining a good feeling between the parsonage and the school where it already exists, and assuredly in very many parishes this concord is perfect.

Where it is so, the zeal of a good pastor draws amazing elements of strength from this mutual sympathy. When he supports the schoolmaster in praising him throughout the parish, it is certain that the schoolmaster will reciprocally co-operate with his divine ministrations, and contribute signally to render it effective. In these happy circumstances a mutual understanding may be extended over a thousand petty details, in order that priest and teacher may consult together upon the means of effecting the greatest possible amount of good in the parish.

A sort of alliance might be established with much advantage. The schoolmaster knows nearly always, and better than any one, the reproaches urged in the parish against the administration of the Curé. If those reproaches were considerable and frequently canvassed, they would not be slow to reach the ears of the pastor; but ordinarily they are rather stifled murmurs and muttered complaints, rarely coming to the knowledge of that one person, who needs but a single hint to remedy the evil.

On his part the Curé is well aware of all that *is* said against the schoolmaster, because it is to him that the parents carry the discontent they feel at any course of action, which, though not really material, has nevertheless a tendency to lower the esteem and affection so necessary to render his office an unmixed good.

Nothing will be more profitable to the pastor and schoolmaster than a mutual agreement, to inform each other frankly and kindly of the little complaints current in the parish in reference to either. To sustain each other constantly and openly in all circumstances, and in secret to exchange affectionate warnings; here is an excellent alliance, one of those contracts called by the Romans *do ut des* (give and take), which cannot fail to secure the peace and advantage of the contracting parties, and at the same time contribute to the general welfare of the flock. At the same time, beware of indiscreet confidences, which may hereafter work mischief if peace becomes endangered.

186. But the Curé and the schoolmaster must not be occupied with themselves only. Their task is the moral and religious welfare of the children confided to their care; this constitutes their important work, and to this all their efforts must be directed.

To fulfil this duty to advantage it is necessary that they should from time to time interchange special communications. In these interviews they should take a list

of the children who attend the school and the catechisms, and passing from one name to another, so as to omit none, they should exchange all necessary information respecting each child; they should state, according to their observations, what course they think best suited for the benefit of this or that one; they will exchange their remarks on the conduct of the children, and those remarks will make known the strong and weak side of each character.

On either part, then, a precise knowledge as to aptitude, docility, piety, temper, morality, etc., may be obtained, and aided by these details, it is evident that good is likely to be worked with increased abundance and facility.

187. We recommend the Curé to impress especially upon schoolmasters the necessity of the children behaving well at church. There is on this point a sad negligence, an unwillingness to interfere, to speak more precisely, an insupportable disorder.

The children, although under the eyes of the schoolmaster, laugh, talk, throw their heads from side to side during the Holy Sacrifice of the mass, even at the most solemn moment, as we have so often seen. Every one laments it, every one complains, except the one who ought to lament and complain more than all, we mean the schoolmaster, who becomes familiarized with this unseemly inattention, and never seems even to dream of applying a remedy.

Such want of discipline is far from commending the schoolmaster who tolerates it, and the Curé who does scarcely anything to prevent it. It is certain, however, that a little firmness on both sides might obtain the most happy results. Look at those good Brothers of the Christian Schools! One, or two at the most, have sometimes the charge of three or four hundred children at church, and the superintendence is so well carried out, that the children, by their good behavior, edify the whole parish.

Let the Curé come to an understanding with the schoolmaster on this point; let him point out the abuse against which we now protest, and urge him to take the necessary measures to stop it; if it be necessary, let him return to the charge, not in anger, nor in a tone of sharp reproach, which would perhaps only aggravate the evil, but with that mild, amiable, and persevering zeal which invariably triumphs over the greatest obstacles.

188. It happens sometimes that several schools exist in the same parish, and that there exists a rivalry of old date between them, which charity has often to deplore. The Curé, under such circumstances, is in a somewhat delicate position.

It seems to us, that at first he should never declare himself openly against any one of these schools, unless it should have fallen into public discredit consequent upon its bad government, its irregularities, and scandals. Yet even then he must in these different cases endeavor to remedy the evil which he deplores by all the industry of a holy zeal.

But, apart from these cases, which are happily rare, the Curé should not show publicly, by outward act, that he is the decided opponent of any particular school. If he does so, he is certain to array against him not only the master or mistress of that school, but also the parents of the children who attend it. He should be careful, and as much as possible observe a strict neutrality. He should visit all the schools in the parish, assist, without distinction, in the distribution of prizes, and in the other formal gatherings which are customary in these different establishments, and prove by a consistent conduct that he is truly the Pastor of all.

We agree, nevertheless, that there would be no great objection to his showing rather more interest in schools the masters or mistresses of which are affiliated to some Congregation or religious Order, than in those which are kept by lay persons. We know that of necessity mem-

bers of these congregations and the parish priest are closely connected, and a little favor on his part towards them will surprise and offend no one. Yet there must be no sort of formal opposition, no open strife, no unkindly criticism; marks of interest, devotion, and benevolence towards all will be readily and scrupulously manifested by the Curé whose sole inspiration is a prudent and godly zeal.

189. We have spoken in the preceding article, of visits to the schools. This visiting is a work eminently pastoral. The schoolmaster will generally feel himself honored by it, and the children prove, by a smile of welcome, that they are not indifferent to the affectionate visit of their pastor.

A short address in these circumstances, dictated by the heart, rather than by the intellect; a warm exhortation to diligence and the practice of virtue; a kind compliment to the ability of the schoolmaster; a glance at the copy-books; a few questions, if you will, to the most advanced in some branch of their school work; all this, crowned by the distribution of a few little prints or books given to those with whom the master expresses himself best satisfied, cannot fail to produce excellent results, and to leave a happy impression on all. It is very rarely that the occupations of a Curé are so multiplied that he cannot repeat this visit once a month, especially when there is but one school in his parish.

As to the children's great festival, with the formal distribution of prizes, it is quite clear that the Curé should be the life and soul of it. His absence would infallibly be remarked, and would produce the worst effect. It is an occasion on which the Curé should especially manifest, in a paternal and winning discourse, those feelings towards the children, the parents, and the schoolmaster, which ought to find their place at the bottom of his heart. With tact, judgment, and zeal, it is incredible how much can be said in this address which may be use-

ful to every one. Their minds are admirably disposed; their hearts are bounding with joy; it is one of those days when the pastor is most beloved, and when, in consequence, his exhortations will be best received and be the more fruitful.

190. Till now we have spoken only of the master and the boys' school. We have supposed that there was a mistress for the girls; however, in many places the master is charged with the instruction of both sexes, while occasionally it is the mistress who has the double charge.

We do not know how to pronounce too strongly against such a custom. It is subject to the most serious inconveniences, under many aspects; and it is so serious a matter, that several Bishops have felt it their duty to oppose it officially, so far as their rights and privileges extend.

If this abuse should exist in the parish, we advise the Curé not to make a disturbance, but to suppress his dissatisfaction till he has ascertained his footing with the prudence that should always characterize his conduct. He should ascertain whether there be any possibility of remedying the evil; and whether a violent attack would not produce new disorders without checking that which he is striving to destroy. For it is evident, that if the evil is irremediable; if, for instance, the municipal authority, backed by the superior power in the same hierarchy, and further supported, perhaps, by the authority of the university, is strongly resolved to avoid imposing additional expenditure upon the district, and to have only one schoolmaster or schoolmistress for the children of both sexes; if the Curé knows positively that, in directly attacking this abuse, he will compromise his authority, make enemies of the mayor of the district, and the most influential parishioners who form his council; that he will perhaps completely upset the parish, which till then had been so calm and peaceful; if,

as we say, all these inconveniences are to be apprehended, and if, on the other hand, success, should he make his attack, is very far from assured, the only course practicable is to tolerate an evil which cannot be prevented.

But the diocesan statutes are opposed to all this! Well, then! write confidentially to the author of the diocesan statutes. Tell your Bishop what goes on in your parish contrary to his rules and regulations; but do not omit at the same time to represent to him the existing state of circumstances and feelings; and if you are conscious of your own ardent and impetuous desire for a reform, take care that your report to the Episcopal authority be not influenced by the excessive ardor which animates yourself. Let your report be precise, exact, and without a shadow of exaggeration. Show equally what there is to fear, and what to hope; represent with impartiality your own arguments for the destruction of the abuse, and those of your adversaries for its maintenance. After that, remain quiet, it is no longer your affair. God will intimate to you His will through your Bishop, and let that will become the rule for your conduct.

Moreover, if, as will probably happen more than once, the episcopal authority does not see in this a *casus belli*, there is no question that the watch over the school on the part of the pastor must be as assiduous as possible. If he is on good terms with the master or mistress, he should call their special attention to the inconveniences attending the assemblage of the two sexes in the same school; he should make arrangements with the chief authorities, and with the mayor, to obtain, at least, the separation in class of the two sexes, that they may never be associated; he should also recommend the master or mistress never to leave the children alone, and always to dismiss the girls at least a quarter of an hour before the boys. And he must seize every opportunity of declaring his desire to see two schools in the parish, the advantages

which will result from it, and the inconveniences it will remedy.

All this being uttered as the expression of a simple wish, without any acerbity, and in tones of zeal and piety, may prepare their minds for the desired reform, which in the end may thus be obtained without excitement or commotion.

191. Although we have in this chapter spoken only of the schoolmaster, it is clear that the details into which we have entered apply, in a great measure, to the schoolmistress; we will abstain then from repeating for the girls' school advice already given for that of the boys'. We will merely mention some points of difference which will require special advice, and the importance of which will be at once perceived.

The harmony which we have so earnestly recommended between the schoolmaster and the Curé should assuredly exist between him and the schoolmistress; but he must not, under pretext of harmonious working, establish too frequent and assiduous an acquaintance. If the schoolmistress is still young, most of all, if she is very young, such assiduities will soon be remarked, censured, and suspected.

It should never be forgotten, that when a priest lays himself open to these suspicions his ministry is at once and utterly ruined. It is all very well to say that these frequent visits are in every particular innocent and pure, that they are even very advantageous, that the conversation touches upon nothing but what is good and profitable. It is altogether a mistake, a most deplorable delusion! You are observed in the parish, canvassed, criticised; that is sufficient. No need for us to know what passes in your private communications before condemning them. They may be dispensed with, and it is absolutely necessary that you should preserve your reputation of being a good priest unsullied.

No familiarity then; the visits of the schoolmistress

to the parsonage must be few, very few, and equally few the visits of the priest to the schoolmistress when she is alone at her own home; and in these visits ever bear in mind this axiom of the saints: *Sermo rarus, brevis et austerus*. It is always at the schoolhouse, and when the children are there, that the Curé's visits must be paid. Again we say, without fear of exaggerating the precaution, that the Curé should maintain with the girls' class a greater degree of modesty and gravity than with that of the boys; he should avoid expressions even in the least degree tender or affectionate, and not allow himself any of those familiarities or caresses, which have, if you will, nothing very serious in them, but which a holy priest must carefully avoid.

192. It will perhaps be asked, whether an elderly schoolmistress may not be often at the parsonage without inconvenience, and whether that familiarity of which we have spoken must be as strictly avoided even when the advanced age of the schoolmistress shelters her from all censure?

To this we reply, that indisputably the danger to which we have pointed is much less grave; but we would have it remarked that, even under the most favorable circumstances possible, it is still far better to suppress these frequent visits, when they are too often paid.

This decision does not rest upon the same motive, but upon inconveniences of another kind, on which we ought to make a few remarks.

In many dioceses the schoolmistress is nearly always a woman who makes a special profession of devotion; not unfrequently she belongs to some religious Order, or to some Congregation dedicated to the instruction of children, or the care of the sick. Now it is clear that these good women have, in general, the desire to be often at the parsonage; it is there that their pastor and director resides; it is there that they breathe the sweet odor of piety which is not to be found in other houses, at least

to the same degree; it is there that they go, their laborious work ended, to pass a few moments of repose and relaxation. All this is true; but it is not less so, that they too often slightly merit those reproaches which St. Paul cast against certain widows whose society he counselled Timothy to avoid. They think it allowable to devote to idleness all the time which is not required by their school; and this time they employ in gadding about from house to house, and mostly to the parsonage; *Simul autem et otiosæ discunt circuire per domos*; and not only are they idle, *non solum otiosæ*, but they run over with useless words, and sometimes worse than useless, *sed et verbosæ*; they are curious, and hunt after the news of the parish, *et curiosæ*; and they desire not so much to learn the news, as to have the pleasure of spreading it, *loquentes quæ non oportet*. As they learn many things at their school, they desire to make them known at the parsonage; and as the parsonage is a house open to every one, and necessarily much frequented, they hope to find there additional means of feeding their curiosity, and to swell the repertory of news which they collect.

What results from all this? Loss of time in the first place, for the schoolmistress and the Curé, if he listens to her; but that is not the only objection; amongst all this news, if some is true, some is also false, and invented; the schoolmistress, who is likely to have her antipathies, resentments, or other germs of littleness and passions, which charity condemns, is, unconsciously perhaps, influenced by the bad dispositions of those with whom she mixes, and ends by infecting the priest with the dislike which she feels against such and such of his parishioners. Hence arises the coldness of the pastor towards certain members of his flock; hence, too, occasional angry self-justifications and bitter reproaches, and these often for things not nearly so serious as the schoolmistress has given him to understand.

What is the final result? The parishioners, seeing that

such scenes occur again and again, set themselves to find out the source of these clandestine reports that are brought to the Curé, and which upset the parish; and when they discover, as almost always happens, that the schoolmistress is the one who sows the mischief, they rise as one man against the newsmonger for her gossiping, and against the priest for listening to the gossip.

Put an end, then, to these frequent visits, which do no good, and which may often do great harm; put an end to this babbling and gossiping at the parsonage, which sets the parishioners by the ears, and which God can never bless. Send the schoolmistress off to her holy duties, and let us occupy ourselves with our own, which are more holy still.

193. In terminating this most important subject, in the Name of Jesus Christ, and in the interest of souls redeemed by His blood, we conjure those Curés who read this chapter, and who have the misfortune to be at war with their schoolmaster or schoolmistress, to examine themselves seriously at the foot of the crucifix; let them consider whether, drawing their inspirations from the urgent and strong reasons which charitable zeal dictates for the establishment of harmony between the parsonage and the school, they would not take a part infinitely more wise and advantageous for the spiritual good of the parish, than if, perpetuating the strife, they restricted themselves to considerations which they hold in high estimation, but which, at bottom, are weak, very weak, perhaps even pitiful and frivolous, especially when compared with those which zeal and faith suggest. In fact, if we examine into some of these considerations, we shall understand their weakness in a moment.

"It is not I who am in the wrong," will be said at first. Now is this excuse edifying in the mouth of a priest, an excuse which we refuse with so much energy whenever we preach the forgiveness of injuries? Is it edifying, above all, on the part of a Curé, who, solely because the

wrong is not on his side, determines to prolong a fatal division which might probably be terminated by a slight sacrifice of self-love? And besides, "the wrong is not on my side:" is this proposition as true as it seems? It appears to us, considered under a double aspect, both true and false at the same time. That the wrong is not on your side in the sense that the commencement of discord and division is not your act, we admit; but the wrong is on your side in this sense, that, as a priest, and, more, as pastor of the parish, you ought to know how to impose upon yourself some sacrifice to arrest a great evil, and to effect in the bosom of your flock a considerable benefit.

"My authority," is the next argument, "would be compromised if I followed your advice." Your authority would be compromised! a complete mistake! A frivolous pretext, suggested by self-esteem! Ah! put your authority under the safeguard of humility, charity, piety, self-denial, and zeal, and be convinced that, very far from being compromised, it will be more powerful and more respected than ever.

"I have already made concessions and employed means of conciliation; all has been useless." If you have done morally and Christianly all that you could do, that is to say, all that a saint in your place could have done, a Francis de Sales, for example, or a Vincent de Paul, then assuredly there is nothing more to be said. But in good faith, is it not possible to do more and better than you have done? Have the concessions been what they should have been? Have all the means of conciliation been exhausted? That which you could not obtain by yourself, have you attempted to gain by the intervention of other influential persons? In a word, are the resources of zeal, which are inexhaustible when it is ardent, really at an end? I wish it may be so; but frankly, I have some difficulty in believing it.

Oh! if it were possible in these circumstances to tear

from the heart the very last fibre of self-love, and to replace it instantaneously by a profound humility, what obstacles which now seem insurmountable would vanish of themselves as if by enchantment!

CHAPTER VIII.

INTERCOURSE WITH THE CIVIL AUTHORITIES OF THE PARISH.

194. WE quit an important matter to treat of another not less so. The civil authority, personified in the mayor and his council, is not always, it must be acknowledged, confided to men who are friendly to religion, or zealous protectors of its ministers. On the other hand, the spiritual administration of the parish does not always devolve on prudent, wise, zealous, and conciliating Curés. Now, when these different elements, so well prepared for a conflict, meet in the same parish, what skirmishes, what struggles, what divisions, and often what scandals ensue!

As an opening observation, we would say, what is, moreover, apparent to the eyes of the world, that a Curé should be disposed to make all sacrifices which conscience permits, in order that perfect harmony may reign between the mayor and himself. He should act in this way, not only because the mayor, if badly disposed, will take pleasure in showing himself unrestrained in his behavior, audacious in his pretensions, impetuous in his attacks, but also because a struggle with the municipal authority is a struggle with the parish which it represents, and over which it almost always exercises a high influence.

From the first, then, as is evident, every Curé, jealous for the full success of his divine ministry, should lay in

an abundant provision of gentleness, abnegation, humility, and charity. Without this he will stir up tempests against himself, in the midst of which he will see his peace and happiness withered, and the efforts of his zeal ineffectual and sterile.

195. It is impossible to imagine the deplorable effects of a division between the mayor and the Curé. From beginning to end there is not one day of perfect calm. Instead of that inner peace, that joy of soul, which is the fruit of order and rule, the Curé will have only trouble, anxiety, and perpetual agitations. And when he is so situated, is it possible that the operations of zeal should not be impeded?

To be wholly given up to God, and to our ministry, devoted from the heart to the salvation of our brethren, and to the conversion of sinners, needs perfect liberty of mind, a well-regulated soul, a treasure of calm and peace, which permits us to devote ourselves unreservedly to our holy functions. And this is the reason, as we have already stated, why missionaries and apostolic men produce fruits so marvellous in their abundance.

Besides, in the midst of these struggles, conscience is not always silent; she well knows how to aggravate by stings of remorse whatever there may be already painful in our position. In fact, some degree of temper almost invariably enters into these divisions, and under this malignant influence we say and do many things which offend against more than one Christian virtue; and which, escaping in the heat of action, return in the time of recollection and prayer, as if to expiate by the grief they cause the faults which we have committed.

Moreover, while we already carry within ourselves the germ of a thousand vexations and inquietudes, the mayor is not idle. Exasperated to see himself thwarted by a Curé, whose unguarded speeches, cutting remarks, and encroachments, in the mayor's judgment illegal, are all reported to him, he does not fail to use his influence to

diminish that of his enemy; and, as he is often without religion and without conscience, he does not scruple to add slander and calumny to sarcasm. When made acquainted with this injustice, the Curé grows indignant, he loses patience, he no longer weighs his words, he does not calculate the consequence of his actions; then follow a crowd of ill-grounded pretensions and acts of imprudence, false steps, intrigues, and cabals; all so many new elements in the division already so decided, and quickly becoming yet more deplorable. The Curé has his friends and flatterers, it is true, but if he knew the exact state of things, he would see, perhaps, that the number of his enemies far surpasses that of his friends.

Here, then, the parish is divided; a part of the flock is in arms against the pastor, and, we say it with pain, here is the pastor also in arms against a part of his flock; for in these circumstances the Curé unites the mayor and his partisans in the same anathema.

196. By the side of this picture, which assuredly is not overpainted, and on which we might still lay additional coloring without exaggeration, let us place that of a parish where all is in order.

What a difference! What a calm after the tempest! Here the two rival authorities are united: they walk hand in hand, without quarrel or collision; if in things of little importance they should encroach one upon the other, instead of standing upon trifles, they wisely and kindly take no notice of such insignificant encroachments. The mayor and the Curé vie in honoring each other with mutual confidence. Every hour they may be observed exchanging marks of respect, esteem, and cordial affection. In a multitude of circumstances where the Curé has need of the mayor's assistance, and reciprocally, he is sure beforehand to be amicably received, and to find kind offices granted as soon as asked.

The mayor avails himself of every opportunity to

eulogize his *Curé*; he extols his virtues and his character, he undertakes his defence when attacked, he expresses his regret on seeing him called to another post; and, at the first announcement of this sorrowful news, he loses no time in writing, in the name of the whole parish, to entreat the Bishop to leave at the head of the flock the venerated pastor who is so worthy to guide them.

On his side, the *Curé*, who enjoys unalloyed peace and happiness, does not fail to display the joy of his heart in speaking equally of the affection which his flock bear to him, and of the kindly regard of the municipal authority.

Every one knows that he loves his parish, that he desires to live and die there, and that he considers himself as a father in the midst of a tenderly beloved family. His simple desire is to do all possible good at his post, and to labor without flagging for the salvation of the souls confided to him. What a happy disposition of mind and heart is this for undertaking this holy task! Surrounded by respect, esteem, confidence, and affection, he speaks, and is listened to with favor; he acts, and every one supports him; he expresses a wish, and it is granted, even before he asks it. Happy parish! Happy pastor!

197. Undoubtedly, some one will say, happy is the pastor of a parish like this; but are there not sometimes intractable mayors, with whom it is absolutely impossible to sympathize, and who are the scourges of the parish where they exercise their despotic empire? Is not the *Curé* compelled, in many circumstances, to make head against them; and can he do this without provoking storms and divisions?

To this we reply, that there are very probably such mayors; we will say even that it is morally impossible that there should not be such characters among the many thousand mayors in France. We will add that, when a *Curé* is so unfortunate as to have for mayor a man of

this stamp, he needs great virtue, zeal, and prudence, to avoid the occasions of divisions and trouble which are ever springing up. But, perhaps, we might be permitted, after having made these concessions, to say in a whisper, but to say, nevertheless, what is generally observable on this important point.

With attention, we shall mark two things: First: that certain Curés are always on good terms with their mayors. They pass from parish to parish; they are chosen expressly for posts where the mayors are crabbed, cavilling, mischievous, impious, etc., and they always triumph over the obstacles, and maintain peace. Secondly: That other Curés are always, or at least generally, on bad terms with their mayor. As they never fail to prove to their Bishop that the error is not on their side, and that it is impossible to live in peace with the mayor of their parish, they are transferred to another, and again farther; and it seems that the first mayor follows them everywhere, for they are on the same terms with all as with the first; that is to say, on the very worst.

Whence then comes so striking a difference between the Curés of the first category and those of the second? Let us say it frankly; the first are *holy* priests; the second do not altogether merit this qualification.

We say it with conviction; with some very rare exceptions, a *holy* priest, without sacrificing his principles, and without doing violence to his conscience, can win the esteem of the worst mayor. But weigh this word *holy* well, and do not cite with a triumphant air this or that Curé of your acquaintance who is on bad terms with the mayor, and who, notwithstanding, is a good Curé, beloved by his brethren, esteemed by his superiors, and enjoying an excellent reputation among his people. All this may be true, without this Curé being a *holy* priest in the rigorous acceptation which we have given to this word. (See Chap. 75.)

A *good* priest is not a *holy* priest; and it is of the latter

only that we speak when we say that, with some very rare exceptions, he would find in the holiness of his own life the means of conciliating the worst of mayors.

198. What is to be done then, when you have a bad mayor? I conjure you, dear brethren, ponder well the answers which you will receive to this question.

Never take counsel of self-esteem, but only of humility, gentleness, charity, abnegation, and zeal. And this the *holy* priest does, because he possesses these virtues in an eminent degree. But he who is simply a *good* priest, does not always do this. How many really good priests, acknowledged to be so by all the world, do we see martyrs to the miseries of self-esteem! And when this self-esteem reigns in a heart, who can say of what inconsistencies he is guilty, whenever he is thwarted, wounded, and mortified. Inconsistencies often deplorable, pregnant with divisions and troubles, which are always successfully avoided by the *holy* priest. How so? Because he is profoundly humble, and thoroughly distrusting himself, he lives only for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

What must be done when there is a bad mayor? We must be extremely cautious, as if ever in the presence of an enemy; weighing every word, and not letting a single whisper escape which, becoming known to the mayor, might arouse ill-feelings. It often happens that a person, apparently worthy of our entire confidence, in a moment of abstraction, merriment, or folly, divulges that which was confided to him; nothing more is wanted to aggravate difficulties, for the removal of which no stone should be left unturned.

A Curé should measure the effect of all his steps prudently, and supposing that his adversary observes them, he should avoid everything which is likely to irritate or exasperate him. He must do even more; he must not only take such precautions, but try by every means to please him, and to destroy the unjust preju-

dices that his neighbors may have conceived against him. Thus, he must take every opportunity to speak favorably of his mayor throughout the parish; he must be his defender when any one blames his conduct, and openly allow his conviction that the mayor believes himself justified in his course; that he may, besides, have been deceived by flatterers and false friends, that doubtless he will soon open his eyes, and cheerfully hold out the right hand of a frank and sincere reconciliation, which will spread joy and consolation in the parish.

These kind words, so full of charity, scattered here and there in the midst of the flock, will infallibly be reported to the mayor, and will convince him far better than a thousand irritating discussions that the error is on his side. Afterwards, our own conduct towards him should be that of perfect courtesy, and if an opportunity is afforded to do him any agreeable office, we should take advantage of it as a piece of good fortune, and as a means suggested by Divine Providence for the restoration of harmony.

199. This is what must be done when unfortunately the evil exists, and the division is complete. If you are so happy as to be preserved from such contentions, if peace reigns between the spiritual and civil authorities, you should thank God with all your heart, and most carefully avoid all that might mar this edifying harmony. For it is infinitely better to prevent divisions and conflicts, than to have to destroy them when once they have arisen.

Now, one of the most important points on which we have to advise the Curés in order to prevent the fatal dissensions of which we have been speaking, is to consider whether any particular act of authority they are about to perform belongs exclusively to the spiritual power, or whether it be not, more or less, an encroachment on the municipal authority. The line which separates these two authorities is often imperceptible, and it

is precisely because it is so difficult to define, that on each side the parties believe themselves still on their own ground, when they are no longer so. We have noticed that an encroachment of this sort has been almost always the ordinary cause of those lamentable feuds existing between the Curés and the mayors.

How often have we seen Curés, otherwise virtuous and orderly, but naturally ardent, punctilious, and enterprising, full of self-confidence, settling upon their own judgment grave and knotty questions, acting upon their own decisions, obstinately maintaining their own decrees and their own acts; and all this with the tone of an absolute authority. Such Curés have contracted the habit of command. The least resistance offends them. Strong in their own conviction that they are acting with the best intentions, and that the spiritual good of the parish will result from the success of their cause, they urge their point with irresistible vigor, and the more obstacles they encounter the more imperious they become.

How many false steps are here! How much imprudence in such conduct! How many seeds of strife in claims so obstinately maintained!

What therefore is to be done to avoid these evils? Once more then, it must be ascertained whether we have the right to do what we so much desire to undertake; and then, the right being acknowledged and allowed, whether it be expedient to act immediately. In the circumstances of which we speak the question of seasonableness is scarcely ever sufficiently considered. We say: *I am in the right*, and at once set to work, forgetting this brief saying of Saint Paul: *Omnia mihi licent, sed non omnia expediunt*.

Let us never fail to examine most attentively these two points:—Have I the right to act?—Is it expedient for me to act? And if there remains the least doubt, let us clear it up by consulting the episcopal authority, which should always be our compass and our rule. But,

in consulting this high authority, let us take care not to mislead it by a partial and unfair statement of the case. Let us not forget to place, side by side with our claims and our weighty reasons, the danger of embroiling ourselves with an influential mayor, and of throwing the parish into a state of confusion and uneasiness, which, in all probability, will paralyze the zeal of the pastor, and inflict serious mischief upon the flock.

200. "I have done all this," some Curé will say; "I have consulted my Bishop, and have done so with perfect impartiality. Now, the answer is come, and his Lordship, seeing I had the interests of my charge at stake, is of opinion that I ought not to give way; what must I do?" It is needless to say: obey your Bishop.

But, take care not to follow the example of some Curés, who, finding themselves backed by the powerful authority of their Bishops, engage in the conflict with redoubled ardor; which, good as their cause originally was, makes it almost bad by the spirit in which they maintain it. Reason and right are on your side; well then, try to keep them so to the last.

Take the greatest precautions to render the means which you are about to employ appreciated. Pay a personal visit to the mayor; and do not act as some Curés, who, upon the slightest collision, hold no communication with the first magistrate of the parish, except in writing. Go and call upon him. Show him the utmost deference and courtesy. State to him, without pride or bitterness, but with gentleness and charity, the painful necessity under which you find yourself compelled to complain of such and such a thing, or to oppose this and that other. Tell him, with evident sincerity, that you value peace and harmony beyond everything; that you would be most grieved to see the smallest cloud arising between him and yourself, and that you will take every opportunity to prove that your feelings of esteem and respect for him are unchanged.

With these precautions, and the help of God, which it is most desirable to implore beforehand, we may trust that things will turn out, if not well, at least in such a manner that peace will not be at all, or but slightly, disturbed. If things were to happen otherwise, it would always be a great consolation to think that nothing practicable had been omitted for avoiding the conflict. Difficulties, embarrassments, obstacles, vexations, never ought to trouble us, if conscience tells us that we have done nothing to bring them upon us.

201. How sad it is, when, instead of following the rules of prudence indicated above, men follow only their own opinions and their own false impressions! How sad when it causes them no regret to irritate a man who, unassisted, has it in his power to render fruitless the operations of the most ardent zeal!

And, unhappily, this is the result when you make up your mind to be in the right towards all, and against all; when you will not learn to comply, to give way, to lower yourself even, for the sake of peace; this is the result when you are wholly eaten up with your own dignity, when you will not, when, you say, you cannot, make concessions and compromises. Then, your every step is a false one; then, by words more or less imprudent and careless, you are flinging brands of discord into the heart of a parish of which you are by duty and by office the peacemaker. You abuse the mayor at every opportunity, you paint the faults of his conduct, the injustice of his claims, in strong relief, you vex him, you torment him, you plot against him in the elections; in a word, you do all that is needed to exasperate him and drive him to extremities.

Cannot we picture to ourselves the state of a parish which has at its head a Curé of this stamp? The good are mourning and the wicked exulting. Yes, exulting; for nothing can give greater weight to their declamations against religion and its priests, than the power of

instancing a Curé who outrages, without discretion, and at every opportunity, the virtues of gentleness, humility, and charity, which from the height of the pulpit he charges others to practise.

202. We are mistaken perhaps; but we fancy some of our worthy brethren, in reading this chapter, are murmuring an inward reproach against us, and saying, "Really, you side a little too much with the mayor."

We do not see, and we cannot see, what ground there is for such a reproach. Nevertheless, we would venture to affirm that it is not a *holy* Priest who urges it. All who deserve this noble name, far from blaming, agree with us, and offer ardent prayers that our words may find a faithful echo in every parsonage.

Whence then this reproach? From some Curés, good men no doubt, worthy men in many respects, who, we hope, will become *holy* Priests; but who, not being so yet, at least, not sufficiently so as to establish peace and charity upon the ruins of self-esteem, have been, and perhaps still are, at variance with their mayor. Oh! how clever we are in finding reasons for blaming those who see in us faults which we do not choose to avow, and who propose to us a remedy which we do not choose to adopt.

We side a little too much with the mayor! By no means. Ah! if we could speak to them; if we could be sure that they would consent to listen to us; truly, our words, although tempered with charity, would have a very different energy from those we have just uttered. But it is not to the mayor we are speaking; it is to venerable pastors, to worthy brethren that we are giving advice, and to whom we are recommending the practice of the virtues of charity, humility, and gentleness, of which they themselves give such beautiful descriptions in their sermons.

We know but too well that there are mayors who are immoral, irreligious, persecutors of the clergy, lovers of disturbances, full of intrigue, fraud, and duplicity.

But we know also that we are sent by our Divine Saviour as lambs into the midst of wolves; we also know that as this tender Saviour never ceased to be the lamb to His last breath, we ought also, after His example, to remain lambs in spite of the ingratitude which betrays us, the falsehood which calumniates us, the irreligion which despises us, the hand which robs us, the tongue which wounds us. We know that we are not perfect ministers of Christ crucified, if, in the cause of peace, and of the salvation of souls, we shrink in cowardice before a worthless sacrifice of self-esteem. Finally, we know we ought to have more virtue than our enemies have vice, more charity than they have malice, more gentleness than they have bitterness and violence; more self-renunciation than they have arrogance and pride.

O Jesus! Saviour of souls, and Sovereign Priest, teach all Thy ministers this lesson, and give them courage to practice it.

203. What should the Curates do in the midst of these struggles? Their position is somewhat delicate, and we think it our duty to give them a few words of advice. Besides, we address these counsels not only to the Curates, but to all Priests forming the clergy of those parishes where divisions such as these are found.

If there are any, which we do not believe, who, in these unhappy circumstances, become the flatterers of a mayor of whose hostility they are afraid; who espouse his cause, and who, if not in public, at least in secret, blame their *Curé*, betray his intentions and his plans, and swell the cry of his adversaries; such conduct is infamous, and we wish we were able to stigmatize it according to its deserts.

But there are others, perhaps, who, on the contrary, are ardent and devoted partisans of their *Curé*. Instead of appeasing, they irritate him; instead of combating the reasons which he thinks require him to prolong the strife, they suggest to him new ones of which he had not

thought, and which only inflame an ardor already far too strong; instead of giving him a truthful report of the state of public feeling, derived from their personal knowledge, they give him to understand that victory is certain, that the mayor and his few partisans are utterly defeated, that the whole parish approves of its pastor, and demands his persistence. They go even further; making the cause of their Curé their own, they take part in the strife as if it were necessary that they should figure in it. They come and go, they negotiate, they consult, and all this with a fire, an ardor, an exaggeration of zeal which would ruin the best of causes.

What is the consequence of this? The wound enlarges itself and festers, till it even becomes incurable; the parish is transformed into a battle-field; the pastors, fully occupied with their strife, think no more of converting sinners than sinners think of their own conversion. A deplorable state, the fatal consequences of which are incalculable as regards the eternal salvation of souls!

Finally, other Curates (and these again are *holy* Priests) comprehend at once, by the torch of that lively faith and sincere piety which enlightens them, that in these unhappy circumstances they have a mission of peace and conciliation to fulfil. Let us observe this good, this holy Curate! Admire a zeal which is so prudent, so able, so charitable!

Without saying one word, either in public or in private, which might cause the least annoyance to his Curé, if reported to him; without taking one step which indicates the smallest opposition to him whose authority he shares in the parish, he makes his observations, nevertheless, on the state of public feeling; he treasures up what he hears; he remembers all he notices; and then, with exquisite tact and discernment, he casts a veil over all that would naturally irritate his Curé, and, on the other hand, tells him with fitting pre-

caution, but still with frankness, all that he thinks may serve to terminate the difference.

As to his bearing towards the mayor, it is calculated to conciliate matters, if conciliation be possible; without letting a word of blame escape against his Curé, he is equally careful not to say anything which might offend the mayor. He behaves so as to obtain over the latter the greatest possible influence, and uses that influence to work effectually for the re-establishment of peace. To obtain so desirable an end, he draws from the bottom of his heart those lively and ardent words which holy priests can always find in time of need; words which charity suggests, and which sometimes disarm in an instant the most implacable enemies.

Evidently, such Curates are a pattern for all who find themselves placed in these delicate circumstances. Their wise, disinterested, charitable conduct, infallibly wins for them the esteem of the mayor, the gratitude of the Curé, and the affection of the faithful.

How is it men do not see that everywhere and always it is this atmosphere of piety, and of the graces which piety unites in itself, that makes our ministry respected, and abundantly procures the glory of God, and the salvation of souls?

204. We have recommended, as a rule of prudence, that the Bishop should be consulted in the event of the serious circumstances occurring which have been treated in this chapter. And this, because it is the right way of avoiding imprudence, and of ascertaining accurately the Will of our Divine Master.

Besides the fact that our Bishops are our fathers and our guides, and that, in all our embarrassments, it is to them we should naturally have recourse, it is evident that, seeing things from a higher position than ours, and with a more perfect disinterestedness, as being personally unconcerned in the strife, they are the better able to advise us. We, who are on the field of battle, and

struggling hand to hand with our enemy, are in great danger of taking for our guide that cursed self-esteem, which, feeling itself wounded, suggests to us nothing but to return blow for blow, wound for wound.

In such circumstances, who can tell all the petty passions which influence us, all the snares which malice spreads in our path, all the flatteries which blind us, all the follies which invade and mislead our imagination, all the temptations which seduce us? In the midst of this trouble, this agitation of intellect and heart, is it wise or prudent to take counsel of ourselves alone, in order to learn what path we ought to follow?

Let us have recourse, then, as faithful and submissive children, let us have recourse to the spiritual father, whom God, in His infinite mercy, has given us, and wait, as from heaven, for the advice of our Bishop. Do not forget this; it is not only in the unhappy quarrels which you may have with your mayor that you must accept the direction of episcopal authority; but generally, and in all circumstances where you are obliged to make a decision involving consequences of high importance. How many false steps you would avoid; what rash enterprises you would renounce; how many dangerous innovations you would postpone; how many abuses even you would tolerate, if, instead of taking upon yourself the responsibility of an important decision, you would humbly consult him who has grace to answer.

205. We will not close this chapter without making an observation which seems to us of the highest importance. When we said that almost always a Curé, when he is a *holy* priest, will be on good terms with the worst mayor, we did not mean to say that all Curés who are at peace with bad mayors are *holy* priests. For, alas! we know but too well that there are, or, at least, there may possibly be, Curés who purchase this peace at the price of sacrifices against which religion and conscience revolt.

Such Curés are ordinarily good-natured men; there is nothing hasty or impetuous in them. A calm and peaceful life, free from disturbance or collision, is their delight. They stand well with everybody, less from any principle of charity, than because the slightest collision would trouble their inward peace. Their faith has no great vitality; their piety does not throw out any very strong light; least of all has their zeal any great energy. To judge by their general conduct, the human element with them prevails infinitely over the divine. Optimism is the salient feature of their character. They think all is well in the parish, provided there are none of those scandalous disorders which excite universal disaffection.

It is easily conceivable that, under the rule of such a pastor, a bad mayor may do almost what he will. He takes any liberties; he permits himself encroachments and actions of various nature which far transgress the limit of his rights. It is true that in return for the excessive condescension of the Curé he lauds him to the skies. He especially extols his tolerance, that moral virtue which impiety has transformed into vice by the altered notions which it entertains of it.

Ah! no doubt a Curé of this stamp is at peace with a bad mayor; but it is not by the conduct of such a pastor that we ought to regulate our own.

We have not said, and we never shall say: tolerate what is intolerable; we have only said that it is well to examine carefully whether there is any way of opposing the pretensions of a bad mayor; that it is prudent, in many circumstances, to consult the Bishop before acting; and that when, after due consideration, we find it necessary to raise the standard of resistance, it is right to exhaust the resources of gentleness and charity, in order to avoid as much as possible the grave inconveniences of a rupture. In this manner, we see, all is conciliatory. Principles are saved, conscience is calm, opposition is restrained within wise limits, and, according

to all appearances, success is, by God's help, if not perfectly assured, at least very probable.

We would hope that the advice here given will be scrupulously followed by those among our reverend brethren to whom it is applicable.

CHAPTER IX.

OUTWARD INTERCOURSE WITH SINNERS FOR THEIR CONVERSION.

206. A LIVELY faith always brings, as a natural consequence, an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls. For how can we believe that the sinners by whom we are surrounded hang suspended over eternal fires, without making an effort to snatch them from such fearful torments? But, above all, when there exists between us and these unfortunate sinners intimate and sacred bonds; when they belong to that flock of which we are the pastors; when we know that God did not think it unworthy of His Sovereign Majesty to shed the last drop of His Blood for the redemption of their souls; when we consider the energetic words which He addresses to His ministers to remind them of the account they will have to render of the souls confided to their care: *Sanguinem eorum de manû tuâ requiram*; in truth, we cannot comprehend, and, in reality, we do not believe that there are any priests, least of all any pastors, so indifferent and so cold as to remain passive spectators of the damnation of their brethren.

If, however, there are such, as we view their profound calmness, and perhaps, alas! their perpetual idleness, their excessive merriment, their noisy dissipation, can we suppose that a large part of the spiritual family com-

mitted to their charge is sleeping every night over the mouth of hell, at the risk of awaking in its depths!

If, in the silence of night, we heard at our door the stifled voice of an unfortunate, with the assassin's dagger in his throat, imploring our assistance—ah! even if he were our open enemy,—our hearts would be so touched with compassion that we should not flinch from any sacrifice in order to save his life. Right, no doubt, and very right. But that which would not be right, but an inexplicable inconsistency when examined by the light of a lively faith, would be the exhibition of so much zeal for the rescue of an open enemy from a temporal death, which cannot after all be long delayed, and the contemplation of friends, brothers, sheep whose pastors we are, suspended over the fires of hell, without employing the many and easy methods in our power for their deliverance from an eternity of torment.

What, then, is needed to determine us to use these means? We have told you we must have a lively faith. Faith, we have; faith, lively, bright, penetrating, perhaps we have it not. For instance, supposing we really saw with our own eyes one of our parishioners, no matter whom, sleeping peacefully, or madly running over the open brink of hell, should we remain cold, insensible, without motion or compassion? Should we refuse him all help, even simple advice? To these questions our heart, without hesitation, makes the answer which charity suggests. Yes, we should fly to his assistance with an irresistible ardor. Consider the devotedness of priests at any great fire.

Why should our zeal be so ardent? Because the danger is before our eyes. Why is our zeal so cold when our work is the conversion of sinners? Because the danger is not actually in sight; let us say, rather, because the eye of faith is so bedimmed, obscured, and enfeebled, that it is unable to throw into the flaming abyss one of those quick and penetrating glances which seize the in-

visible as the visible, as is said of Moses in the Scripture : *Invisibilem tanquàm videns sustinuit.*

For, indeed, we know perfectly well, and it is an article of faith, that every sinner in mortal sin deserves hell. And, on the other hand, we know by experience, that every day a number of sinners die in this state, and are damned. We know, too, and holy Priests attest it, that often there needs only some kindness shown, some advice given, some act of devotedness and zeal, to decide the conversion of a sinner. Let us then reanimate our faith, rekindle our zeal, and lend at least the assistance of our charitable warnings to the many sinners who, perhaps, wait only for this feeble help to escape hell and merit heaven.

207. This chapter is devoted to the consideration of this means of conversion. To run in search of sinners; to give them charitable advice; to remind them of the importance of salvation; to press them, to conjure them, to quiet their agitated conscience; to refute the objections which they raise for delaying their conversion; in a word, to lay siege to their souls in order to gain them to Jesus Christ, snatch them from hell, and carry them to heaven, in spite of their mad resistance; this should be the occupation of every priest, each in the sphere of action in which God has placed him. May we be able to lay down wise rules upon the exercise of this holy occupation for those who are willing to devote themselves to it with generous ardor!

But before laying down these rules, let us briefly show what priests are the least disposed to adopt them. This will open the eyes of many who, out of the confessional, perhaps do not make in the course of the year one single step to determine a sinner's conversion.

There are some who have days and hours set apart for hearing confessions; they are regularly at their post, with praiseworthy exactness. This is very right. But for a great number of sinners who are cowardly, careless,

apathetic, and timid, it is evident this is not enough, and that they will not go to their pastor, if their pastor does not first come to them. Nevertheless, these priests do nothing more than we have stated above. They receive at the tribunal of penance all who present themselves; but to search after sinners at their homes with a view to their conversion, is what they never do. The *compelle intrare* is a means of conversion entirely out of their way.

Others recognize the great advantage of these counsels when given in season; but they are excessively timid when required to speak a word of conversion to a sinner. They cannot speak of piety except at the tribunal of penance, or in the pulpit. Everywhere else, it seems that their tongue is tied when an opportunity presents itself for giving good advice, or for introducing a word of edification. It is embarrassment, it is timidity; let us use the right word, it is human respect in a great many.

Some persuade themselves that this method is useless, that it annoys sinners without converting them, that they will not make piety beloved by these troublesome solicitations, that it is an exaggeration of zeal, and that besides, at church, from the pulpit, we have abundant grace for speaking to sinners of God and of salvation.

Miserable excuses! Oh! try this method, and you will see if it is useless; go and find the sinners, speak to them with discretion, of course, but above all, with the gentleness and the sweetness of true zeal, and you will see if your advice is felt to be fatiguing and tiresome; you will see if you do not sometimes gain sinners more effectually by those private conversations than by long sermons, which they hear coldly, and at which they nearly always avoid being present. Who will enlighten these poor blind souls, if they do not come to the light, and if nobody brings it to them?

There are others who do not refuse to speak to sinners of conversion; but they do it in a jesting tone; the answer is given in a similar tone, and there it ends. As

nothing shows that the speaker attaches any great importance to his advice, it remains, and naturally must remain, unfruitful. Who knows, even, if sinners do not grow more hardened still, in seeing that so little account is made of the salvation of their souls?

In fact (and this includes not only the priests of whom we have spoken, but certain others of whom we may yet speak), many do not like to employ the means of conversion which we propose, because they have not enough zeal for the salvation of sinners. The great words: *Soul, Paradise, Hell, Eternity, Blood of Jesus Christ, Death of a God*, which should inspire a holy and lively emotion, leave their hearts cold and insensible; and these other words which have an intimate connection with the first: *Faith, Charity, Zeal, Devotedness*; these words, or rather the virtues which they represent, having their seat only on the surface of the soul, but feebly second their attempts.

It is to all priests of this character that we especially address both our previous remarks on this important subject, and those which we shall now make on the methods which we recommend of the practical exercise of zeal.

208. Good advice, tending to procure the conversion of sinners, may be given to three classes of men, namely: To persons of rank; to those of the middle class; and to those of the lower class. This distinction is necessary, for one uniform method in addressing all would be utter failure. Zeal, if it ought to be ardent, ought also to be wise and discreet; and from this discretion, well or badly observed, often follows the success or failure of the steps taken for the conversion of a sinner.

Let us speak first of the precautions necessary in giving advice to persons of rank.

After having commended your pious attempt to God, and having asked the graces necessary for a happy result (and this must always be remembered, not only in

the present circumstances, but before every exercise of zeal), we must attentively examine the character of the sinner with whom we have to deal.

We have already learned that he belongs to the upper classes of society; but that is not enough. We must ascertain whether he is a man of talent or not; for we may ordinarily feel more at ease, and speak more freely, with a man who is little instructed, than if the reverse is the case. We must learn whether he has a good temper, whether he is gentle, frank, cheerful, communicative, and disposed to receive advice without being angry; for if this is the case, we may enter upon the subject far more easily; yet still keeping within the limits which propriety prescribes, and with which we ought never to dispense.

We must learn whether he is not, on the contrary, of a gloomy, harsh, taciturn, and susceptible temper, and little disposed to receive advice; in that case extreme caution is requisite. Pride being the ruling principle in a man of this character, a single word is sometimes enough to draw upon us one of those sharp and cutting rejoinders, which at once check all farther advances.

In short, we must ascertain whether he is utterly ungodly, which is but seldom the case, or whether he is like so many who, at bottom, retain their faith, but who wish to persuade themselves and others that they have lost it; or whether he is simply indifferent and apathetic, but full of faith, notwithstanding the vices to which he is prone.

It is evident that although these different sinners have need of conversion, they must not all be addressed in the same manner.

The ungodly will wish, no doubt, to enter upon a discussion, and to prove his arguments: it will be well therefore to be prepared for this kind of attack; and, the better to succeed, his system of unbelief, if he has one, or his favorite objections, if he has nothing else, must be ascertained from some of his relations or friends.

As for the sinner who believes, but is indifferent, apathetic, careless, and who says coldly, "I believe, and I certainly do not wish to die as a brute; but there is no hurry, I have plenty of time, I have business, etc.," it is evident that he requires arguments appropriate to his state, and that we must be prepared to urge strong arguments, drawn from the faith which he professes, in order to combat successfully the frivolous pretexts which he alleges.

Thus we see the first thing to be done is to gain a full understanding of the state and character of the sinner whose conversion we have undertaken.

209. Now, what shall we do? The preparations are made, the information obtained, the parties are met. Shall we give advice, and what advice?

We think that, in general, to persons of the upper class, advice can seldom be given directly. Their pride opposes it.

To give advice smacks a little of authority; the father gives advice to his son, rather than the son to his father; and when the son believes it is his duty to give it, he believes it is his duty also, if he is wise and respectful, to use precaution and delicacy.

On the other hand, to receive advice which refers to the reformation of our habits and faults; and to receive it without a frown, supposes a certain amount of humility. Now, it is allowed that, in the upper classes, especially when piety is not there to correct the sentiments, to guide the acts, and to dissipate the vain prestige of rank, pride is generally to be found at the bottom of the heart in the place of humility; and pride dislikes advisers.

As a general rule, therefore, we must not open at once on the subject of conversion with the great. We say as a general rule, for there are particular cases where this may be done without the least inconvenience; for example, when we know positively that the advice will be

perfectly well received, and that it is even expected, and besides that we are on such a footing with the receiver of the advice as permits us to act directly, and without beating about the bush.

210. These particular cases excepted, we must take an indirect way.

To gain the hearts of these persons by excessive gentleness, by attentions, kindness, and the union of those qualities which serve as a passport to the advice we may be able to give by and by; this, although indirect, appears an excellent method of attaining the proposed end. Often, too, as opportunity offers, it is well to express our adherence to doctrines which, without contradicting the principles of the faith for a moment, prove nevertheless that our piety is neither narrow nor repulsive. This often removes many prejudices, and contributes greatly to smooth the road towards conversion.

A few facts of history for the glory of religion, when they enter naturally into the conversation; the conversion of any great sinners; the marvellous success of a mission, or the sudden death of some hardened offender, struck down in the very act; all this, related without any direct allusion, and as a simple contribution to the conversation, may produce much serious thought, and arouse salutary remorse.

At other times, we may advantageously, and most naturally too, in speaking of our trials, draw a vivid picture of the joys and consolations of our holy ministry, the ineffable happiness arising out of the conversion of a sinner, the exquisite sweetness of the tears which we shed, and which he himself sheds. If this be well drawn, above all, really felt, our hearers will be favorably disposed towards conversion.

Sometimes sinners of this class make, in a jesting tone, the first advances. With an amiable but playful air they speak of confession, of the difficulties which it presents, or some other point of religion upon which the conversa-

tion affords them an opportunity of introducing a word. This word must not be passed unnoticed or unimproved; not, indeed, as a point of departure for a regular discussion, sustained in a serious tone, which would contrast too harshly with the cheerfulness of our adversary; but it is desirable to reply, with an amiable gravity, to the jesting objection which has been made. This reply may have much effect, although the features do not bear any very serious expression. It is possible with tact to speak grave and useful truths, even with a smile upon the lips.

It is not uncommon, in houses where the women are religious, to find them turn the conversation directly to religious subjects. If they did not think of it, it is an excellent idea which might well be suggested to them. A sister with regard to her brother, a mother with her son, a wife with her husband, may most easily take advantage of the presence of the priest to enter into a serious discussion. The opportunity is excellent, and, with God's help, even if no immediate conversion is effected, at any rate many objections may be refuted, many prejudices removed, remorse awakened, pious emotions inspired, and, to sum up all, the way prepared for a speedy conversion.

There is another favorable circumstance which sometimes presents itself without any interference of ours, and of which we must never fail to take advantage; it is when we find a sinner of this class at the moment when he is a prey to violent grief.

A priest is often a witness of these heart-rending scenes in his ministry. When a mother, a sister, a wife, has just breathed her last, it not unfrequently happens that the weeping relations of these cherished beings, lost under the violence of their affliction, let themselves fall into the arms of the priest who shares their sorrow; and then are heard, in words broken by sobs, their outpourings of heart, reflections on the shortness of life, on the

vanity of the world and its pleasures, and a thousand other things, prompted by the excess of sorrow, which they would never have uttered in moments of calmness.

Oh! it is then that a holy priest can display all the resources of his zeal to work the conversion of the afflicted mourner. In these moments he can say everything; he can urge them, conjure them, to give themselves up to God, in order that they may see again in heaven the dear friend whom they possess no more on earth. He can set forth, with all the zeal and energy of which he is capable, the utter frivolity of worldly vanities, and the solid consolations of the teachings of faith. Let him speak with holy transport; let him respond to the excess of grief by the excess of zeal and faith; no one will think of taking offence at such language, which, at any other moment, would be silenced immediately.

211. Such are the ordinary circumstances in which we may practise with regard to sinners of the upper class that exercise of zeal which we have recommended in this chapter. In order to succeed the better in these means of conversion it is exceedingly advantageous to be prepared beforehand with the strongest reasons and the most convincing arguments, which are found necessary on such occasions. This would require but little study, and is a task in no way laborious, one which God will surely bless.

Unbelievers, real or apparent, have but in few cases examined closely into the reasons of their unbelief. Remove some common objection against Hell, confession, the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and their arguments are exhausted. If, then, we prepare carefully the victorious confutation of these, or other of the similar objections commonly employed, it is clear that success will be far more certain.

When with sinners who have preserved their belief, we must also be prepared with strong and powerful reasons

for combating the frivolous pretexts urged by them for the delay of their conversion. Some writers, Père Judde for example, in his *Œuvres Spirituelles*, and Bourdaloue, in his *Pensées*, will furnish short, conclusive, and concise arguments on the great and terrible truths of religion, which will have an extraordinary effect in discussion. It would also be well to provide some well-selected historical facts. The account of famous conversions, of fearful deaths, or other visible chastisements of God, never fails to make an impression more or less deep on those who hear it, especially when, as we are here supposing, the torch of faith still shines in their heart.

212. Let us now pass to sinners of the middle class. We include in this category all those who come between the great of the upper class and the simple country people, the workmen, and the poor, who compose the third.

The sinners of this second class are much more accessible than those of the first. Certain precautions, however, should not be neglected, although we may say that in general they are less rigorously necessary than with the higher class. Besides, nothing is more easy than to ascertain from relations or friends the character, temper, habits, the degree of hardness of heart in the sinner whom we wish to convert; it is upon the knowledge of these data that the plan of attack must be determined.

213. The sinners of whom we are speaking will generally receive advice in a direct manner. This is easily intelligible. They are aware of their social position, and if they do not think themselves inferior to a priest, neither do they think themselves his superior. The susceptibilities of pride are less to be feared than in the first class; and direct admonitions present in general but little or no difficulty.

In return for this advice, a priest must not be surprised to bring upon himself occasionally a few jesting words, a few puns, or light expressions. The wit of this class frequently finds expression thus, and we must not be

surprised that they show off before a man whom they think capable of appreciating the acuteness of their humor. But all this is nothing to a zealous priest; he must respond to the raillery in an amiable manner, and sometimes even by innocent pleasantry, yet always with good taste; and then proceed gently and seriously to his business.

If, from jesting pleasantry, the speaker passes on to rudeness, and positively refuses any explanation, it is clear that we must stop here, and wait for a more favorable opportunity; but with gentleness, amiable manners, and the demonstration of devotedness and zeal for the salvation of sinners, the priest will be almost always favorably received.

214. When the discussion is once begun, we must avoid that passionate vivacity which rather impedes than aids conviction. We must guard against the use of humiliating expressions. A little timely compliment will be far more effectual. Neither must we refuse to hear the reasons advanced, however weak they may appear; otherwise we might seem desirous of stifling the discussion, and these reasons, however worthless, would appear all the stronger to our opponent, in proportion as we should seem to put them aside unnoticed. Not only must we avoid all appearance of despising the arguments which he employs, but, if at any time he urges reasons more or less valid, we may with advantage show him that we appreciate all that is correct in his opinions.

A concession made with a good grace, and with an appearance of generosity, will often, although in reality without importance, be most agreeable to our opponent, and dispose him to accept our future arguments more readily.

215. When we see that conviction has been produced, that all objections are victoriously refuted by reasons whose validity is recognized, and plainly admitted, then without doubt there is the commencement of success;

but ordinarily it is yet far from complete. How many sinners, for instance, convinced by solid reasons, confess that they are ashamed to remain sinners, and nevertheless defer indefinitely the confession of their faults at the tribunal of penance! To gain this step, which will be the true signal of victory, we must, as soon as conviction is worked, and while the sinner is yet under the weight of arguments which he acknowledges to be irresistible, come directly, and without loss of time, to the matter of confession.

No more argument now. The intellect has ended its task; it is for the heart to take its turn. Heart! Heart! this is what is really wanted. Draw from the depths of that heart some touching instances depicting in characters of flame the unspeakable delight which the aged sinner experiences after the acknowledgment of his misery; speak to your hearer of the sweet peace procured by the treasure of a good conscience, of the happiness attending the fearless thought of death, judgment, and eternity.

Tell him, with tender effusions of zeal and charity, of the happiness that you yourself will feel in seeing him at your feet, while you will be to him the instrument of divine mercy. Tell him, above all, that confession, at which he is so terrified, is a source of the most abundant consolations; that the confession of the greatest crimes does not make the least impression on the confessor, obliged as he is, by his office, to hear daily the recital of the profound miseries of humanity. Tell him, besides, that a *yes* or *no* is often all the penitent has to say, because the confessor can lessen the pain of a detailed confession by a multitude of interrogations. Lastly, regard the thing as settled; do not admit the idea that he will still resist, and obtain on his word of honor the positive promise that at such a day and hour he will make his confession.

We must never fail to insist strongly upon a positive

promise on this point. Otherwise the conversion will be thrown back into a vague and undetermined future; it will be a failure. The appointment of the day and hour is of the highest importance.

Sometimes, but not often, grace is so strong, and God so visibly blesses the urgent entreaties of a holy priest, that the sinner, holding out no longer, falls suddenly at his feet. Oh! if on these happy occasions the priest can confess the sinner on the spot where he finds him, let him not hesitate an instant to procure for him the grace he demands; and if he cannot hear his confession except at the church, let him hasten thither without delay; for the morrow may perhaps be too late.

I remember one of these instances of mercy which affected me exceedingly some twenty years ago. In consideration of my good intention, I pray you to pardon me for speaking of myself. An aged sinner, a man of talent, and belonging to the first of our categories, came to pay me a visit; and as he had learned that I had composed some hymns, he expressed a wish to see them. I thought the opportunity favorable for attempting his conversion. I chose, therefore, a hymn on the return of the sinner to God, and I sang it to the poor prodigal who was with me. The first verse was heard with much attention; the second with still more interest; and the following with a continually increasing emotion. Observing what was passing, I felt an ardor which I tried my best to throw into my voice. At last arrived the verse which achieved the victory; it finished with these two lines:

Fall at His feet, poor child.

Thou shalt recover thine innocence.

If he did not fall at the feet of God, at least he fell into the arms of His minister, who was full of comfort for him. The conversion was complete.

216. Let us now say a word about sinners of the third

class; that is to say of laborers, mechanics, servants, the poor, and, speaking generally, all those who compose what is commonly called the lower class of society.

In this class unhappily we find much immorality, and many gross vices.

The inhabitants of the country are, in many dioceses, in the most deplorable state; they are ignorant of religion, and are never seen at church. In the dioceses where this ignorance does not exist, we observe the practice of religion joined to brutal passions. Unbelief, in many parts of the country, begins to insinuate itself among the masses; the sacraments are neglected by the men, public worship is little attended, and by the side of a small number of believers, who are the consolation of their pastor, there is a multitude of sinners, more or less hardened, who grieve and discourage him.

As for the mechanics, especially in towns, the case is even more painful. There is among them, particularly in certain trades, a contempt for religion and its ministers, which amounts even to hatred, coupled with brutal and gross vices, from which it is very difficult to separate them.

Well! how is the poorer class to be addressed? We need to have observed them closely, to be fully aware how ignorant, gross, corrupted, and brutalized they are. All this is very terrible, and no one who has a single spark of zeal in his heart can look coldly upon so many souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and yet daily falling by thousands into the depths of hell.

Nevertheless, are there not many pastors who, accustomed to live in the midst of these disorders, familiarize themselves in some sort with the spectacle of these iniquities, and leave sinners to run on to their eternal ruin?

It is to them, nevertheless, that the souls of these sinners have been confided by Him Who died to save them. He speaks by the mouth of one of His prophets

these terrible words, which we have already quoted, and which can never be too thoughtfully considered: *Sanguinem illorum de manu tuâ requiram.*

217. As for these sinners of the third class, a Curé will be the less excusable in not making attempts at their conversion, since, of all his parishioners, they are the easiest of access, and frequently of conviction also.

In this case advice may be given directly, without the least inconvenience. The laborers especially, and the poor, will receive such advice not only without offence, but even with gratitude, I might almost say with a degree of pride. In fact, they take it as a great honor that a Curé, whom they regard as one of their superiors in rank, should call upon them for the express purpose of interesting himself in the salvation of their soul.

The rich might suppose that a priest, a Curé, had interested motives for his visit. At least, they might consider it as the polite discharge of the usages of society. But a man of the lower class, who knows that the priest has nothing to expect from him, and that he comes to see him in his poor dwelling without any other intention than to work for his salvation, what sentiment can he feel, if not that of gratitude? Ah! be assured, the pious pastor who by the activity of his zeal shall prove to the poorest of his parishioners that he desires their salvation no less than that of the rich will, except in very rare instances, be affectionately received.

218. Yet sometimes, though rarely, it may happen that he will be received with rudeness, vulgarity, and perhaps with insolence. This should not frighten the zealous priest. Very often the sinner who has received him thus will, before long, afford him great consolation, if he responds to that rudeness by lively marks of interest, zeal, and devotedness.

I undertook, one day, the conversion of a man of this class, one of the oldest sinners in my parish. He was naturally rude and insolent. His neighbors, who knew

his bad character perfectly, pitied me greatly when they saw me enter his house to attempt his conversion. Indeed, the first look he gave me was anything but gracious, and his words were in perfect keeping with his look; but I pretended not to perceive it, and after many circumlocutions, and details foreign to my principal business, I slipped in a few words of religion; proceeding, little by little, I pronounced the great word *Confession*. At this word his brow lowered, his eye kindled with indignation, and he cried, "You! confess me! never, never! If I do confess, it shall not be to a smooth chin like you. Never, never!" The *never* of this old sinner did not form so long a never as he thought; for, twenty-four hours after this visit, the "smooth chin" confessed him.

219. There is another excellent way of working efficaciously for the conversion of sinners of this class; it consists in rendering them some service to which they attach great importance. A rather large alms, if it is a poor person that we wish to convert, or a loan to one who is in a temporary embarrassment, or some service which procures an agreeable surprise, never fails to excite at the bottom of the heart of the receiver a strong sentiment of gratitude; and when the heart is filled with gratitude, it is easily open to conviction.

We knew a sinner who had not approached the sacraments for a long time, and who had not even assisted at the Sunday Mass. A zealous priest undertook his conversion, and obtained it without having said a single word to him on the subject. He had rendered several eminent services to this sinner, and the latter did not think he could thank this good priest more than by procuring him the satisfaction of seeing him come back to God with his whole heart.

If already, as we have said, people of the lower class feel themselves honored by the mere visit of their pastor, and the especial interest which he displays in coming expressly to find them at their own homes, in order to save

their souls; if this simple step inspires them with so much gratitude, how much more keen would be this feeling when this same pastor renders them an important service which they were very far from expecting.

It will be said that this way is apt to make hypocrites, and that many, in order to please their benefactor, or to obtain new services at another time, would pretend to be converted without being really so. Without doubt, this may happen; for, alas! what does not the wickedness of the human heart abuse? Nevertheless, it is certain that, should the sinners of whom we have spoken have hypocritical intentions at the time they have formed the resolution to confess, a zealous priest, aided by grace, may easily perfect the dispositions of these penitents by touching exhortations on the terrible truths of religion, and on such other points as he shall judge most likely to effect a radical and complete conversion.

220. This is what we would say particularly in reference to sinners of the third class. As to the manner of treating them, of discoursing on matters of religion, and of bringing them to the final step of confession, we must go back to what we have said in speaking of the preceding class.

We would only add, in concluding this chapter, a general observation which concerns the three classes, and which deserves to be taken into grave consideration.

We must avoid, as much as possible, attempting a conversion by the various methods indicated above, when we are not alone with the sinner whose conversion we desire. If he is in company, even with his nearest relations, he will not be so favorably situated as if he were alone with us. Human respect is one of the greatest hindrances to salvation; and in the present circumstances we may well fear its malicious influence. It costs a sinner something to see all his objections refuted; it costs him something to admit that they are worthless, and the arguments of his adversary irresistible; above all, it costs

him something to promise that, on such a day and hour, he will be on his knees at the tribunal of penance; and this before people who know that for thirty or forty years he has not taken this step, and that he has, perhaps, ridiculed those who have done so.

Besides, the priest himself would be more at his ease when alone with the person whom he wishes to convert. Experience proves that, in this *tête-à-tête* we can be more pressing, more touching, more convincing, than when we discourse before persons who are strangers to the subject. Especially when we speak the language of the heart, it is certain that if we are alone with one whom we wish to win to God, effusions of zeal and outpourings of love fall from our lips which would not have found utterance if others had been present.

221. After having read this long chapter, you will say, perhaps, that in some parishes there are so many sinners to be converted, that you feel discouraged at the mere thought of putting in practice the means we have recommended for bringing them back to God. We hope that none of our readers will yield to this temptation of discouragement. It is very probable that in such parishes we should never succeed in converting all the sinners they contain; but is this, then, a reason for not attempting a single conversion, and for leaving all to rush to their eternal ruin?

Let us ever labor, undeterred by the length of the task. Can we employ our time, when the work of the ministry leaves any at our disposal, better than in multiplying ourselves, so to say, by the activity of our zeal, in order to gain to Jesus Christ souls that He would redeem again by a second death, if it were necessary? To be discouraged! Ah, we should not be the children of the saints, if the sight of a parish to be converted shook our courage and chilled the ardor of our zeal.

When, in 1541, Saint Francis Xavier, not yet thirty-six years old, embarked at Lisbon to conquer India, did dis-

couragement ever make him retreat a single step at the sight of this gigantic enterprise? Far from it; on the contrary, the sight of the immense work which lay before him redoubled the fervor of his love, and the impetuosity of his zeal. During the voyage the ardent desire which he had to be in the midst of his dear Indians, outstripped, with a holy impatience, the distance which he was clearing, and, far from blunting its point, gave wings to his courage. And then, what fruits! what a harvest! what a conquest! In ten years and a half this indefatigable apostle, this second Paul, planted the faith in fifty-two kingdoms, set up the standard of the Cross in three thousand leagues of country, baptized with his own hand nearly a million infidels, and breathed his last at the age of forty-six years, upon a rock in the island of Sancian, his eyes turned towards China, the conversion of which he is ready to undertake, if God will but give him a few more years of existence.

And we! priests of Jesus Christ, like Xavier! called like him to the glorious honor of saving souls, should we feel our courage failing us at the sight of one ordinary parish, because it contains too many sinners for us to anticipate their subjection? Ah! if such are our sentiments, let us humble ourselves at the thought of our cowardice, and hasten to revive a failing faith, and to rekindle an expiring love.

CHAPTER X.

INTERCOURSE WITH THE PIOUS FAITHFUL, WITH A VIEW TO THEIR EMPLOYMENT IN THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS.

222. As appendix to the preceding chapter, we will here speak of one great means of procuring the conversion of sinners, a method which we have mentioned

above, and which, wisely employed, may be attended with the most beneficial results.

If the numerous employments of the sacred ministry do not allow us to seek out sinners as we desire, have we not, near at hand, good and pious believers of both sexes, who require but little persuasion to induce them to consecrate their lives to the all-important work of converting their erring brethren? Here are ready-made auxiliaries, if only we would stimulate their ardor a little, and train them in the practice of this holy exercise. With the help of God, we purpose to do so in this chapter.

223. We have a profound conviction that ecclesiastics in general, and more particularly Curés, Curates, and the priests charged with the ministry of confession, do not profit sufficiently by the assistance which they might derive for the conversion of sinners from the co-operation of the pious faithful, with whom they are so often connected.

Indeed, with a little attention, it will be seen that there are very few priests who devote themselves constantly, and at every opportunity, to transforming each pious believer into an apostle. Under certain especial circumstances, so visibly ordered by Divine Providence that it is impossible not to be struck by them, they will advise the employment of this means; but to adopt it as a rule of conduct, as a system followed by conversion, and, instead of waiting for opportunities to present themselves in order to put it in practice, to prepare and create them, not only to-day or to-morrow, but forever, and always, without any abatement of zeal; this is what would be seen on all sides, if the fire of zeal animated the souls of the priests; but this is what is seen scarcely anywhere, because, unhappily, every sinner is abandoned to himself, and can with truth exclaim, in the words of the paralytic in the Gospel, as he sat by the pool, "I have no man:" "*Hominem non habeo.*"

And yet, what is more easy than the employment of the means we propose? Every day we are in communication with many pious souls, who are scattered in the midst of the world, and who desire nothing better than to second our zealous efforts, if we would but suggest the idea to them. Ah! we should be wise enough, without instigation, to apply to these or other persons, and to implore their assistance, if we knew that they would procure us even a small temporal advantage, to which we attached any value!

And when, by a single word of exhortation, we could set these people to work, and employ them in snatching thousands of sinners from hell, not only do we refrain from giving that exhortation, but the simple thought of doing so never even presents itself to our minds.

224. In short, if we were to consider the various circumstances under which we might propose to pious souls the exercise of zeal here recommended, it would soon appear that we only too justly merit the reproach of coldness and insensibility with which we have been assailed.

It is from the pulpit especially that we may suggest and strongly advise the employment of this means. There we have for auditors a multitude of pious souls, who welcome with holy eagerness the words which fall from our lips. Animated by a lively faith, they believe that, in listening to the words of the priest, they hear the voice of God Himself, in Whose place he stands. His counsels are to them as commands. Were he to bid them with a saintly energy to employ themselves in the conversion of sinners, that very day they would devote themselves to it.

But are there many preachers to be found who use this exhortation to the faithful? The missionaries, doubtless, are not wanting in this, as we are well aware, and we also know what abundant fruits this exhortation produces in those places where their divine ministry is

exercised. Ah! when they appeal to all the holy souls in the place; when they charge them, in a manner, with the salvation of their relations, friends, and neighbors, and of all those sinners with whom they have any influence; when they place before their eyes the immense service they will render to those poor misguided ones, in reconciling them to God and their own conscience, how fair a spectacle is offered to heaven and earth in the ardent zeal of those new apostles, who depart hither and thither to preach in the homes of the poor, while the missionaries thunder in the church!

We once knew a very rich lady, in feeble and shattered health, who, during the whole period of a mission, the expenses of which she herself defrayed, made her way into every corner of the vast parish in which she lived, obtained information concerning the various hamlets where she might find any sinners to convert; and, undaunted by wind, rain, or the frightful roads she traversed, eagerly hastened to the conquest of souls, and placed each day in the hands of the missionaries some new fruit of her heroic zeal.

Yes, all this is accomplished by missions; but is anything like it to be seen in the pastoral ministry? Do preachers in general speak of this exercise of zeal? Do they return to the charge incessantly to inculcate its practice upon their pious auditors? Do they preach the value of example in this important subject, and do they generally possess the reputation of fervent and zealous priests?

God grant they may be able to reply in the affirmative to these various questions! Alas! how many sermons are vague, cold, and empty, teaching nothing to the people, and sending them away as they came! How many sermons consequently, usurping the place of solid, affecting, pressing and practical instructions, such as tend to effect the conversion of the sinner, and the strengthening of the just!

225. Another opportunity is afforded at the tribunal of penance of urging this exercise of zeal. There we are in direct and intimate communication with pious souls. Many among them come to confession once a week. What is said to them at these frequent confessions? Very little: some insignificant words to which we ourselves attach no great importance; or at best a vague and indefinite exhortation, which would apply to all the world, and which not only fails to correct, but does not even attack any single fault in particular.

Ah! if after giving to these pious penitents advice suitable, well defined, and perfectly appropriate to the spiritual necessities of each, we were to impose as penance, in place of those general prayers which are nearly always said without attention or profit, that they should make two or three efforts for the conversion of some whom they know to be sinners, the result of their endeavors to be communicated at their next confession; if we would propose this exercise to them as one great means of atoning for their own sins; if, in short, we were to teach them the way of employing successfully this powerful instrument of salvation, is it not evident that the glory of God would be abundantly procured, that conversions would be more frequent, and that these pious souls would lay up for themselves an ample harvest of grace and good works?

226. Again, we are brought in contact with these pious souls whenever we are obliged to receive, or to visit, them for any particular purpose, whether to perform some charitable duty, or for any other reason. Generally, it is in the society of the good that priests are thrown. Nothing then could be more easy, if they were animated with true zeal, than to communicate to these pious souls the divine fire with which they themselves are warmed. This would naturally and instinctively happen if the habitual occupation of our hearts and minds were the search for instruments in the salvation

of souls. If it were our fixed desire, our only thought, the beginning and end of all our actions and endeavors, it is certain that we should be always on the watch for the best means of realizing our pious designs.

How is it that from morning till night the merchant is on the watch for every opportunity of selling his goods? Because his one ruling, fixed, and only thought is to enrich himself by his business. Why does the laborer rise before the sun, and expose himself all day to its burning rays, without murmur or complaint at his hard toil? Because the desire of obtaining an abundant harvest is so strong and ardent in the depth of his heart, that he spares no pains to realize it. How is it that the gambler, when playing, forgets almost his own existence? Why is all his intellect absorbed in unceasing meditation upon the means of triumphing over his adversary, and of making him fall into the snares which he has laid? Because the passion of gambling holds sovereign rule over his heart, and he lives, so to speak, only to gratify it.

Ah! if we, the priests of Jesus Christ, had the passion, the holy passion of zeal in our heart of hearts, how many instruments of conversion we should employ every instant to satisfy it! What care we should take to kindle in the souls of others that sacred fire which our Divine Saviour came to bring upon earth, and which He wills us to fan without ceasing, in order to perpetuate and increase its intensity: *Et quid volo nisi ut accendatur!* What will I, but that it be already kindled!

What help might be derived from those pious souls, to whom we might so easily suggest the means of converting the many sinners into whose society they are so often thrown!

Instead of this, what passes in our intercourse with them? It must be confessed, that these long conversations frequently consist only of an exchange of puerile and frivolous tales. We mutually communicate the lit-

tle news of the neighborhood; we let fall certain sarcasms, more or less sharp, upon this or that individual; we indulge in pleasantries and jests, hardly compatible with priestly gravity; in short, we pass an hour, perhaps two hours, in listening or giving utterance to a thousand foolish nothings, without reproaching ourselves with wasting that precious time which might be so advantageously employed in works of zeal. This is all simple enough; out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; and those who have a taste for dissipation, pleasure, and frivolity, care to speak only of folly and trifles.

If occasionally a serious conversation is commenced, it mostly consists of long lamentations and piteous jeremiads which some good creature comes to tell her confessor, and which he already knows so well, as she says nothing else in confession; for instance, that she is overwhelmed with distractions, that she cannot pray to God, and that she knows not how to act in order to escape from that spiritual dryness which causes her so much sorrow, etc., etc. Such are the useless complaints; such the means, or rather the pious pretexts which she employs to procure the satisfaction of passing an hour or two in speaking of herself to her director.

Train this pious woman in the habit of prayer and particular examen; give her a few good lessons of humility, charity, mortification, and recollection, and after that proceed to works of zeal; ask her, with what sinners, more or less hardened, she is connected? Explain to her the means she should take to convert them, and stimulate her zeal earnestly to induce her to undertake their conversion.

227. But all this demands explanations rather more detailed, and these should be given in so many words. In the first place, it must be allowed that not all pious souls, or those reputed such, are by any means equally qualified for the successful employment of the method

of conversion which we propose. Though we ought to recommend generally to all those persons who make a special profession of devotion to labor actively in the conversion of sinners, it is, nevertheless, certain that we must cultivate with particular care, and employ in preference, those souls who unite in the highest degree the qualities required for this valuable ministry.

Good will, however lively and ardent, does not always suffice to ensure the success of this work of zeal; and sometimes this ardor, this eagerness, instead of attracting the sinner, only annoys him, and drives him farther away than before.

228. The first thing to be done, for the successful employment of the pious faithful in the conversion of sinners, is to inspire them with a taste for this most important work. The zealous priest, especially the pastor, should seize all possible opportunities of exhorting pious souls to work for the salvation of their brethren.

In the pulpit, in the tribunal of penance, in private conversations, he ought to propose to them with energy, and in accents of true zeal, the strongest reasons which he can find for exciting their ardor.* He will say to them, for example, that the conversion of a single soul is the most important work we can undertake; that Jesus Christ, for a work of this nature, did not draw back before any humiliation, any sacrifice, any suffering; and that He, Who so well knew the value of all things, did not think it beneath His Supreme Majesty to shed His divine blood in torrents for the salvation of sinners. He will tell them that perhaps, and even probably, in the purposes of God, the salvation of many souls is attached to the efforts which they may make for their conversion, to the good examples and pious counsels which they may employ for leading them to the practice of vir-

* What follows, to the end of this Chapter, may well serve for a plan of instruction in this important matter.

tue. He will add, that, in laboring to save their brothers they have a well-founded hope of saving themselves, as it is written in the Holy Word, that, "*He which converteth the sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall besides hide a multitude of his own sins.*" He will show them all that is noble, and grand, and, we may say, divine, in saving from eternal death the souls whom God hath redeemed with His own blood. He will tell them that, to think only of themselves is in devotion, as in everything else, pure selfishness; and that the most culpable selfishness is that which prevents us from rendering our neighbor an immense service, the consequences of which are eternal. He will try to impress upon them how shameful and humiliating it would be, if the devil were more earnest in destroying than we in saving souls. Lastly, he will propose to them as examples those so many apostolic men, who have worn themselves out in the most terrible toil and hardship, and who have joyfully sacrificed their lives for the salvation of their brethren.

Having kindled their zeal by these considerations, he will point out to them the best methods of rendering their ministry fruitful. Let us explain these various methods.

229. One fundamental point, upon which we cannot insist too strongly, is to convince those kind souls whom we wish to employ in the conversion of sinners, that they ought to apply themselves constantly to set an example of solid, amiable, and edifying piety, such as even the most hardened sinners cannot avoid praising. This point is of the utmost importance, and it will be seen that this line of conduct will be of service equally to the sinners, who will thus be the more easily convinced, and to the pious souls, who will be the better qualified to convince them.

What influence, for example, can a wife exercise over her husband, who is at church when she ought to be in the midst of her family, and whose household is all in

disorder when she is absent? How will she inspire him with the love of religion, if, whenever she is preparing for the sacraments, he never fails to guess it from her gloomy, sad, silent, and reserved behavior? What effect will be produced by her exhortations to virtue, if, notwithstanding her devotions and observances, she shows herself, on the slightest contradiction, quick, touchy, impatient, difficult to please, full of whims, and wanting in solid and practical virtues? What we say of the wife with regard to her husband, may be said equally of the sister with regard to her brothers, of the servant with her master, and, to speak generally, of all who make a profession of their religion, with regard to those sinners whose society they frequent, and whose conversion they would undertake.

230. To transform religious people into good instruments of conversion, it is necessary to give them advice appropriate to their social position, and the peculiar circumstances of the life of each.

Here, for example, is a young man of the truest piety; he despises the opinion of men; he is regular in his attendance at church, and at the sacraments: he proves by the humility of his deportment that his heart is with God; he is, in his own family and among his fellow-students, an angel of peace, of gentleness, and edification. The Curé of this excellent young man, if he has the zeal of a good pastor, does not fail to regard him as a coadjutor sent by Divine mercy; and it will be with real happiness that he will give him the advice necessary to enable him to succeed in the apostolic work which he confides to him.

He will, therefore, speak with him in private on the subject. In this conversation they will consider together upon what sinners of his acquaintance he can exercise a salutary influence. In most instances he can, in his own family, undertake, with hope of success, the conversion of one or more of his brothers, sometimes,

even, with due precaution, that of his father; often, also, of some more distant relations, who regard him with a special respect and esteem. Once more, he can employ himself with advantage in the conversion of some of his fellow-students, who, though so different from him in their conduct, are, on account of his amiable qualities, glad to associate with him.

When they have thus carefully considered on what sinners they may begin their attempt, they will decide, still acting in concert, what measures offer the best prospect of success. It is now that the wisdom of the holy priest will ably assist the young apostle's inexperience. His counsels will be appropriate to the dispositions of mind, heart, character, in a word, to the particular circumstances of the sinners who are to be converted. He will explain to this good young man what he must do, and what he must avoid, in order to ensure full success in his undertaking, and will give him all the necessary instructions; at the same time binding him to fertilize, by prayer and the sacraments, the seeds of salvation which he desires to sow in the souls of sinners.

Oh! how would this holy apostleship be blessed by God, if it were exercised by his ministers with true zeal, and with a single eye to His glory, and the salvation of souls!

231. Women, under very many circumstances, may be made excellent instruments of conversion. How many do we see united to men of no religion! Many lament and deplore it; others look with indifference on the sad condition of their husbands; as they see a multitude of men in the same case, they are but little affected by a misfortune so universally shared. Others, again, make a few attempts, and not succeeding as they desire, finally limit themselves to asking the prayers of religious friends in addition to their own.

What is it these women need which might often ob-

tain the conversion of their husbands? They need a zealous director, one who would stimulate their ardor, and who would at every meeting remind them that they ought constantly and specially to labor for the conversion of him whom heaven has given them for a husband.

But, alas! how many directors confess the wife for months and years, without saying one word to her of the conversion of her husband! And yet, if there be in the world one person capable of prevailing on a sinner for his conversion, it is surely that one whom God has given him for a companion. When husband and wife are united by a close affection; more especially when the husband entertains for his wife all the consideration, kindness, and tenderness possible, it is certain that if she were to make use of the influence which she has over his heart she might end by making him a good Christian.

These seem to us the principal instructions necessary for the wife. After her zeal has been quickened by the general considerations which we have already proposed, she must be encouraged to redouble her watch over herself, that she may avoid every word and action, however trifling, which might displease her husband. Not only must she be careful not to cross him, but she must study to render herself agreeable to him in all things, to the utmost possible extent, consistently with her obedience to the law of God.

In this manner she will daily gain more and more of his love; and this increase of affection cannot fail to give her increased influence and ascendancy. She must also be told that she ought to take advantage of every circumstance favorable to the conversion of her husband; for example, if she sees him sad and depressed, in consequence of any reverse or misfortune; if she sees him painfully affected by the loss of a friend; if he manifests, by chance words which escape him, any religious feeling; if he suffers from illness; if he has been struck by a

sermon. Under these circumstances, and a multitude of others which are constantly presenting themselves, a woman, earnestly encouraged by her Curé, or her director, may obtain the conversion which is the object of her wishes.

Still it is well to recommend her not to persist, when the first opening is received with evident impatience; she would fatigue and annoy, but she would not convert. She must therefore change the subject, and wait till he is more favorably disposed to hear her. One good recommendation to give a wife is, that when her husband shall ask her some favor which he very much desires, begging her, for example, to accompany him on a journey, or to some innocent party of pleasure, or to grant some other favor, she should tell him, with all sweetness and affection, that she will do so willingly, provided that he will promise to attend to religion.

We should never finish, if we were to indicate all the means which zeal suggests for these opportunities. The essential point is to kindle in the wife an earnest desire for her husband's conversion, and to recommend her to win him by the charm of her gentleness, her kind attention, her amiable piety, and by exhortations given with perseverance, but at the same time with tact and discernment.

232. The wife is frequently a mother; and who can be so deeply interested in the salvation of children as she who gave them life? But still, left to herself what can she do? Doubtless there are to be found in the world many truly virtuous women, who comprehend the vast importance of a Christian education. But, alas! how small is their number, especially in comparison with those mothers who, if not utterly irreligious, which is rare enough, are still indifferent and cold.

One of the great wounds of Christianity in these days is, on the one side, the indifference of mothers to the education of their children; and on the other, the un-

governed affection which they entertain for these same children, an affection which has perhaps never been carried to such an extent as at present. It is in truth a species of passionate idolatry, blind and utterly deplorable. A mother sees nothing but her child, thinks only of her child, speaks only of her child, and employs herself only with her child; in short, I repeat, her child is her idol; and to this idol all else is pitilessly sacrificed.

Who will open the eyes of the mother to this grave fault? Alas! she is so little aware of it, that perhaps she does not say a word about it to the director of her conscience. It is therefore incumbent upon him to give her that advice which is so necessary for her, without waiting for her to ask it.

He must insist, with an earnestness which will show the importance he attaches to it, on the indispensable necessity of giving from the very first onset a solidly Christian education to her children. He must interrogate her minutely on this point, in order to see if she fulfils as she ought the rigorous obligations imposed upon her; and ask her, for example, if she permits herself nothing in their presence that is reprehensible, either in word or deed; if she is careful that they are regular in their morning and evening prayers; if she brings them to assist at the Holy Sacrifice on Sundays and Feast days, and if she sees that their behavior in church is pious and edifying; if she does not overlook their faults, from the fear of making them cross or ill; if she strictly forbids them the society of those young people who are dissipated, and indifferent to all the duties of religion; if she brings them from time to time to the sacraments; if she makes them observe faithfully the law of abstinence, etc.

It is inconceivable how many mothers there are who have reason to reproach themselves severely on these various points, and who yet never mention the subject to their directors. These last, on their side, fearful, we

must say it, of long explanations, and willing to shorten the confessions as much as possible, charitably take for granted that all is right with their penitents on this point, and abstain from those inquiries which would nevertheless in most instances be highly beneficial.

What is particularly to be impressed upon mothers by their pastors and directors, is the formation of habits of piety in their children as soon as possible, and at the earliest age; for the time will arrive when, unhappily, they will lose all semblance of authority over them. When a young man attains his fifteenth or sixteenth year, what attention will he pay to the remonstrances of his mother, especially if, as is often the case, she is not seconded by the father, who thinks far more of educating his children for the world than for God?

How sad for a mother to see her sons abandon all religious duties at the age of sixteen, presaging, by this falling away, that libertinism and ungodliness which awaits them close at hand! How sad for this mother to see them escape so completely from her authority, that she can no longer employ, to bring them back to religion, aught but the voice of supplication and tears!

Pastors and directors, watch! watch! Most probably you have, amongst the souls confided to you, many mothers in this sad situation; arm yourselves with holy zeal, to save their children, and to save themselves.

It is unnecessary to say that the explanations into which we have been entering, apply equally to the masters and mistresses who have servants in their household. In the present day, both penitents and confessors pass over this subject with a most inexcusable lightness. And yet, how many servants, estranged from the sacraments, might, with a little zeal on the part of their masters, be again brought into the way of salvation, which they have so long abandoned!

233. People of rank, when they have piety, may also be made, by the care and the advice of their directors

and their Curés, excellent instruments in the work of converting sinners of a lower class. Their social position gives them considerable influence over these sinners, and they must be taught how to employ this influence to the profit of the souls of the latter, which are often in a melancholy state in the sight of God.

That a priest should strive to convert sinners is very natural; *he follows his trade*, say the people; but when a man of rank turns apostle, and, being already known for his piety, undertakes to awaken in others the piety which animates himself, this affects, edifies, and attracts.

How many sinners might be brought back to God by the pious faithful of the higher classes, if these would make the attempt seriously. In the country, for example, what influence is exercised by a rich proprietor upon the men who farm his land, the laborers whom he employs, and upon all the parishioners generally, who love and venerate him when he is a good Christian, that is to say, when he is virtuous, charitable, and ever ready to render them a service.

If a zealous Curé and a man of this class were to devote their united energies to the conversion of sinners, God alone knows how abundant might be the fruits of their zeal. But are there many Curés who have recourse to the employment of these means? They frequently see these rich people; they sit at their table, and receive them at their own; they are their spiritual fathers at the tribunal of penance; how many good opportunities, if they would take advantage of them, for the saving of souls!

234. What we are now about to say may at first create surprise, but on reflection, the importance of the advice will be seen by experience. If the great can, with zeal, work effectually for the conversion of the lower classes, it may also be said, that frequently there are some amongst these classes who may contribute to the conversion of the rich.

In many large houses there are often to be found old servants, devoted to their masters, whose esteem and affection they have gained by their valuable qualities. Take, for example, an old nurse, who has brought up successively all the children of the house, and who, though always respectful to her superiors, is quite at liberty to make frequent observations to them, which are nearly always favorably received. In the hands, and under the direction, of a zealous priest, such a servant, if she is possessed of sound virtues and consistent piety, if she is beloved by her superiors, if she has judgment, tact, and a certain delicacy of feeling, may often, when alone with her master, or with one or other of the young men whom she has brought up, offer them such advice, and suggest such reflections with regard to conversion, as will produce most happy effects.

It is difficult to realize the impression sometimes made on a great man by a few words of edification, uttered in the tones of piety by a good and holy servant. How many times does God make use of weak instruments to produce great results! *Infirma mundi elegit Deus ut confundat fortia.* God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. It often happens that while no one can utter a word upon conversion to a man of rank, without immediately receiving a hint to drop the subject; by a singular inconsistency, the same advice will be received without offence from an old serving man or woman, to whom entire freedom of speech is allowed.

235. Again, it is in the lower classes that we find good instruments of conversion, in times of serious illness. Pious servants and nurses can often, under these circumstances, effect what would be attempted in vain by relations and friends, who, besides, almost always refuse to offer the smallest suggestion bearing upon confession to the invalid.

If the priest present himself before the way is prepared

for him, either he may be refused admittance to the sick person, or the latter may receive him ungraciously, and show haughtily that he is far from pleased at their fetching a priest before he has requested them to do so. The best plan, in general, is to persuade him to make this request himself. But who will advise him? His relations will not say a word on the subject; his friends still less; and the physicians are content to sustain him with the hope which they themselves no longer feel.

Who, then, will come to the help of this poor soul on the brink of hell? Who? This good and simple woman, who loves God with all her heart; this pious servant, this nurse, who passes the night with the invalid, this sister of charity who pays him frequent visits. These are the useful auxiliaries of a pastor on such delicate and painful occasions.

But he must not abandon these holy souls to their own guidance; he must excite their ardor, and tell them the danger of the sick man, danger of which, perhaps, they are unaware; and he must give them such counsels of wisdom and prudence as he judges more or less necessary.

Here are a few of these counsels. 1. Testify towards the sick man deep devotion, excessive charity, and cheerfulness under every trial. 2. Tell him that prayer will be offered up to God for his relief and recovery. 3. Lead him to unite in the prayers thus offered on his behalf, and to commend himself to Jesus and Mary. 4. Beware of announcing to him abruptly, and without preparation, that he is in great danger, and must make his confession; but reach this point gently and by degrees, only striking the great blow when lighter ones are unavailing. 5. Try to ascertain, after every visit of the physician, his opinion of the invalid's state. 6. Tell the latter, with due precaution, that those who are past human remedy, often find themselves comforted when they turn to the help of religion. 7. Tell him that many physicians have seen

their patients much benefited, after a confession, for instance, which, having set their conscience at rest, has procured for them a spiritual ease, which contributed powerfully to their recovery. 8. Ask him if he has any repugnance to seeing a priest, and refute the objections which he makes, in a gentle and amiable manner. 9. Propose to him the priest who is known to hold the highest place in his esteem. 10. Picture to him the happiness he will experience when he shall be at peace with God and with himself. 11. Tell him that perhaps God has only sent this illness upon him to awaken him to thought; and that if he profits by it for his conversion, God may cure him and prolong his days, that he may set before the world an example of Christian life. 12. These counsels are not to be given all at once, in a teasing and obtrusive manner; but dropped from time to time, and almost in the order we have placed them, the speaker insisting upon them more or less, as they are more or less favorably received; forbearing when it is seen that they are doing more harm than good, and returning quietly to the charge when the opportunity seems more favorable.

Such are the principal instructions to be given to the persons of whom we speak. Further, we think it right to recommend to ecclesiastics, and more especially to Curés, not to defer giving their advice till the time of sickness. Very often at that time it is difficult to meet those who attend the sick, or if they are seen, it is only as they are hurrying past, so great is the need of their service.

We wish that the Curé should be acquainted with those of his parishioners who, from profession or devotion, kind-heartedness and charity, are accustomed to attend on the sick; and that in his conversations with them, he should stimulate their zeal for the salvation of sinners, and give them the directions we have enumerated, or others which he shall judge to be suitable, form-

ing, in some sort, their education on this point. This would certainly produce good effects, and contribute to the salvation of many souls.

236. When we employ in the conversion of sinners any persons who are incapable of sustaining a discussion on religious subjects, persons, for example, of the lower class, or young men and women, they should be instructed not to argue with their superiors in knowledge, least of all, with unbelievers, who have read books antagonistic to the faith, and who think their objections unanswerable. How these unbelievers triumph when they have silenced some poor creature, who has never before heard of the impieties to which they give utterance! They may be seen thereupon puffed up with satisfaction, hugging their unbelief all the more closely, as if the ignorance of their adversary gave a sterling value to their pitiable arguments.

Under these circumstances then, it is necessary that those good souls who have not studied religious questions deeply should abstain from discussing subjects of which they are ignorant. They ought at once to say openly, that they do not choose to argue; that they are not capable of it; and besides, that their faith already renders them so happy, that they will not, by useless discussions, expose it to the danger of the lightest cloud. But they should also add, that with those who are really anxious to be enlightened, and to understand all the arguments in favor of, and objections against so important a matter, such or such an able ecclesiastic desires nothing better than to enter the lists, and that they will engage themselves to procure an interview if the others will consent to it.

If this proposal is not accepted, at least the promise may be exacted from them, of reading those books which refute their boasted unanswerable objections. If this second means is also rejected, then we must try to learn what are the principal objections made by these unbe-

lievers, and next make the refutation of these objections clearly comprehended by the persons employed by us to convert the objectors. Above all, they should be recommended to remind these sceptics, that if they were as convinced as they seem to be, of the power of their arguments, they would not refuse a discussion with an educated man, or the perusal of the book which he offers to lend them.

There are also certain general arguments with which our pious friends ought to be acquainted, in order that, without entering into any regular discussion, they may, nevertheless, set them before the irreligious of their acquaintance.

Thus, for example, it is well to tell them that religion has always been attacked by unbelievers, and that they have been unable to destroy it, during more than eighteen hundred years; that unbelievers have nearly always passions and vices which induce them to regard the lessons of the Gospel as false, whilst virtuous men believe, without difficulty, all the truths of the faith; that he who is determined to believe, sacrifices his most cherished passions, and he who is determined not to believe, puts no constraint upon these same passions, which ought to convince us that the truth is much more on the side of the former than of the latter; that we can never be perfectly certain that religion is false; and that if there be a doubt, we must, in so important an affair, take the safest side; that the true believer, after all, risks nothing in the next life in believing as he does, while the unbeliever exposes himself, if he is mistaken, to eternal punishment; and lastly, that nearly all unbelievers abandon their unbelief as soon as they feel themselves seriously ill, which proves that their unbelief is much more apparent than real.

These, and other similar arguments, to which nothing substantial can be opposed, will suffice to stop the mouth of unbelievers; and every zealous Priest, every Curé

especially, should teach them to the pious believers when in communication with them, in order that they may employ them as opportunity offers, when contending with those adversaries with whom he cannot contend himself.

237. We may see by the various preceding details, how frequent are the opportunities for the exercise of zeal. A holy priest, animated by the lively desire of saving souls, finds every instant the means of satisfying the pious ardor which consumes him.

Does he enter a house? He immediately asks himself how he can benefit the souls of those whom he will meet; what advice he may give, what virtues he may recommend, what seeds of holiness he may disseminate? Does he visit the sick? He prays to God, on the road, to bless his words; he thinks beforehand of the exhortations he will give; he prepares himself, by pious reflections, to speak with that prevailing grace which is as the seal of sanctity; he meditates whether, taking the opportunity of this illness, it may not be in his power to say a few words of conversion to the relations and friends of the sick.

Does he meet any persons of his acquaintance, parishioners, or others, on the roadside, for instance, in the fields or elsewhere? He finds immediately, and without effort or study, some edifying words, some good advice, some mild and paternal exhortation, which is sure to leave a salutary impression.

Does he enter the church? He remembers that he will be beneath the eye of Jesus, and in the presence of many of the faithful; that consequently he must set the example of modesty, recollection, and fervent devotion, which will be a sermon, silent, it is true, but most eloquent in its way.

Is he present at a meal? There also his zeal knows how to find the means of preventing evil and doing good; he adroitly turns the conversation when it threatens to

wound some virtue; he seizes the opportunity to relate some edifying story; he sets the example of modesty in his demeanor, gentleness and charity in his words, and moderation in the use of food.

Does he set himself to work? He prays God to bless it, and implores the necessary light to learn what form of study will most effectually contribute to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. When he knows it, he applies himself with a holy ardor, rejoicing to think that, even in the silence of his study, he is occupied with the salvation of sinners.

In short, under all circumstances, the zealous priest shows himself the worthy co-operator with Jesus Christ, the successor in his work, and the faithful executor of His divine will. Oh! my God! what wondrous and what speedy reform would be seen in Thy Holy Church, if all Thy ministers were animated with such zeal!

CHAPTER XI.

INTERCOURSE WITH THE POOR.

238. WHEN we took occasion to speak of the advice which might be given with advantage to the lower classes, we incidentally mentioned the poor; but there still remains much for us to say on so important a branch of the pastoral ministry; and to this we will devote this chapter.

Let us, in the first place, make an observation, which must have often struck us, if we have reflected upon it ever so little. Nothing more surely conciliates the esteem, attachment, and veneration of the people to the Priest, than the readiness with which he sets himself to relieve the poor. When a Curé loves his poor, when he

pleads their cause on every occasion, when he imposes on himself privations and sacrifices, in order to assist them; when he makes and sets on foot collections for the poor in every quarter; when he has merited the glorious title of *Father of the poor*, we cannot imagine how greatly his ministry is blessed.

Notwithstanding, has the Curé, who does all that we have said, fulfilled his duty towards the poor of his parish? Has he, at least, fulfilled the most important of his obligations? Alas! he may, perhaps, think so; but in the eyes of God, if he does no more, how far is he from procuring for his poor the succor of which they have need. What matters it, for their eternal life, that he gives them the necessary bread for the body, if he does not give to the soul the spiritual sustenance, without which it is dead? What matters it, that he clothes their bodies with garments, if he leaves their souls destitute of virtues, and covered with the rags of sin? What matters it that he distributes among them fuel, to warm their freezing limbs, if he does nothing to prevent their souls from falling into eternal fires?

We have already said, and we cannot too often repeat it, that the spiritual care of the lower classes is, in some degree, neglected in the pastoral ministry. However, we ought, in justice, to add, that it is in the provinces that this neglect is found; for in Paris, and it is one of the glories of that great city, spiritual almsgiving precedes corporal almsgiving; and innumerable works, having for their aim the procuring these double alms for the poor, are sustained every day by the inexhaustible zeal and compassionate charity of the pastors of souls, and a multitude of pious faithful. But in the country, we repeat, it is a very different thing. The spiritual care of the poorer classes is really neglected there, and neglected even by a clergy blameless in other respects, who, probably, have need only of a ray of light to follow with ardor the good example set by Paris.

We shudder over the perversity of the poorer class, its corruption, its profound ignorance of the fundamental truths of religion; and, forgetting that we are the pastors of these poor sheep, we act as if, in their case, it were the body only which needed relief. When we have provided them with this relief, when we can sit down in our parsonage and say, "There are poor, many poor, in my parish; but, thank God, they are well cared for, none are in want of the necessities of life," is it not true that we often persuade ourselves that we have fulfilled all our pastoral duties towards them?

But ask certain Curés, who congratulate themselves upon their poor being so well cared for, what they have done *for their souls* during the past year. Perhaps, alas! they will be obliged to confess, not only that they have not made any special effort for the souls of their poor, but that they have not even seriously thought of doing so. This self-deception is all the more unaccountable, since the Curés of whom we speak are perfectly aware of the great spiritual destitution of their poor.

Indeed, what is more common than to hear priests speaking in this style: "The poor are addicted to every kind of vice; they are idle, intemperate when they have the chance, improvident, licentious, profane, etc. They have not the least idea of religion; they are never to be seen at church, much less at the Holy Table. It is terrible."

But if the irregularities of your poor are so considerable, if their eternal salvation is so seriously endangered, how is it that you, their pastor, you who will have to answer for their souls at the tribunal of the Great Judge, can remain satisfied, like a man who has done his duty perfectly, with having provided the material help which is needed for their bodily existence?

Is it faith that you lack? No; for it is faith which wrings from you these deep lamentations over the conduct of your poor. Is it influence and authority over those

unhappy beings? You have already all the influence you can desire; you are far above them in the social scale; you are their pastor; you are every day, and, in some sense, every moment, their benefactor; you are their nursing-father; they know that, as well through your personal efforts as through your influence with the rich, you provide them with the bread they eat and the clothes they wear. Is it the fear of accosting them, of conversing with them on the great work of their salvation, that holds you back? That you should feel such reserve with one of the upper classes, is easy to imagine, but who is more easy of access than a poor man, especially to his Curé? Is it the idea that all advances would be useless which prevents your attempting them? But possibly you have not yet made any at all, at least, not any with real earnestness and ardent charity, and, consequently, you cannot tell whether such advances would be useless. And, after all, even should they be unsuccessful, you would at least have fulfilled your duty as a pastor, since it is the effort and not the success that God requires of you.

239. We will not carry our inquiries under this head further. We will only add, that a very careful watch must be kept over the whole of our conduct, and our relations with the various classes of society, that we may never merit the humiliating reproach which the poor sometimes cast upon the clergy, that they labor earnestly for the salvation of the rich, and coldly for that of the poor.

If what this class of the community say be true, we keep all our earnestness, our politeness, our kind attentions, our special tokens of personal interest for the rich, while we have only indifference, unkindness, roughness, and coldness for the poor.

They say, further, although of this they can know nothing, that in the confessional we have plenty of zeal, soft and gracious words, long and urgent exhortations,

and even broad and accommodating decisions, for penitents of the higher class; while we have only cold words, severe reproaches, short and hurried exhortations, and rigorous decisions, for penitents of the lower class.

Doubtless such charges are unfounded, and proceed only from the malicious jealousy of those who cast them upon us. Yet, inasmuch as they are so serious and humiliating to the priesthood, we cannot be too much on our guard lest they find a justification in our conduct.

Let us accustom ourselves to esteem and honor poverty; adopting on this point the noble sentiments of the great Bossuet, who chose as the subject of one of his sermons, "*The eminent dignity of the poor in the Church*;" a sermon in which he gives utterance to these beautiful words: "Let no one henceforward despise poverty; true, it was once the dregs of the people, but when the King of Glory espoused it, He ennobled it, and He grants to the poor all the privileges of His kingdom." Let us think over these eminently Christian words at the foot of our Crucifix, or, better still, at the foot of the Divine Tabernacle, where He reposes who has spoken so many denunciations against the rich, and so many benedictions upon the poor; who so entirely took upon Himself the state of poverty which He eulogized, that He chose to be poor in His birth, as St. Bernard says, *Pauper in natiuitate*; poorer still in His life, *pauperior in vitâ*; and poorest of all in His death, *pauperrimus in morte*.

A zealous missionary, who was for several years our colleague, used to say with a charming simplicity, "Oh, how much rather would I see honest peasants or poor persons at my confessional than high-born ladies! It seems as though the absolution clung to their coarse clothing; while one might almost fancy that it ran off a silk dress." May he rest in peace, the worthy Priest, who uttered these words! His memory is blessed in the vast diocese which he made fruitful by his labors, and we

cannot without emotion remember that we received his last breath. May he have many imitators!

240. In reply to all that has been said, some readers will, perhaps, urge, they make no unusual effort, it is true, for the salvation of the poor, but, nevertheless, they do quite as much for this class as for any other. The church, they will tell us, is open to them as to every one; the instruction from the pulpit, if they choose to come and hear it, is addressed just as much to them as to the rest of the faithful; the confessional is not closed against them; they are not denied access to the Holy Table; in short, if they are anxious to save themselves, nothing prevents their doing so, and their spiritual fathers are ready to receive them whenever they choose to come to their arms.

Could the man who speaks thus (and let us own that this language is the literal translation of the conduct of more than one pastor), could such a man say with Him Whose minister he is: *Ego sum pastor bonus*? Could he dare to add: *Bonus pastor animam suam dat pro ovibus suis*? Would he not fear to find his own condemnation in those other words: *Mercenarius, et qui non est pastor, cujus non sunt oves propriæ vidit lupum venientem*? What is the wolf that devours souls, but sin, with which the souls of the poor especially are so much infected? *Et dimittit oves. Dimittit.* Just so; he does not hinder them from coming to the fold; but he suffers them to go astray and lose themselves, without running after them to save them. *Dimittit oves. Et lupus rapit et dispergit oves. Mercenarius autem fugit: fugit;* yes; he is to be found everywhere, except where there are any of his sheep in danger. There are holiday excursions, parties of pleasure, entertainments, card-playing, light reading, etc., *fugit.* And why does he fly? *Quia mercenarius est, et non pertinet ad eum de ovibus.* Fearful words! words which we do not pronounce without trembling at the thought that we, too, ourselves have been pastors.

How different are the expressions above to those of Jesus, the model of pastors! *Ego sum pastor bonus, et cognosco meas et cognoscunt me meæ. . Animam meam pono pro ovibus meis. Et alias oves habeo quæ non sunt ex hoc ovili; et illas oportet me adducere, et vocem meam audient, et fiet unum ovile et unus pastor.* Let us weigh carefully these divine and wonderful words; let us dwell specially upon these: *illas oportet me adducere.* I must bring my sheep to the fold. Does that mean that I am to *wait* for them? So much the worse for them if they refuse to come. It is for you to answer, Priests and pastors: *Ad vos, o sacerdotes!*

When Jesus, in another passage of His Holy Gospel, represents Himself once more as a Shepherd, having a hundred sheep under His care, ninety and nine of them being safe, and one single sheep going astray, does He show us this Shepherd sitting at ease within the fold, ready to receive the wandering sheep whenever it may please to return to Him, but refusing to go after it to rescue it? Oh! no! Listen: *Quis ex vobis homo, qui habet centum oves, et si perdiderit unam ex illis; one out of a hundred, unam ex illis; it does not signify which, young or old, fat or lean, all are equally dear to Him; all demand his anxious zeal: Nonne dimittit nonaginta novem in deserto et vadit ad illam quæ perierat.* You see, *vadit ad illam;* it is not the sheep which returns of its own accord to the Shepherd; it is the Shepherd who runs after the sheep. *Donec inveniat eam.* Here is another lesson; it is not one step only that He takes, one means of salvation only which He employs. No; if the first step be not enough, He takes another, then another, and another, and so on continually, without ever giving up the attempt: *Donec inveniat eam. Et cum invenerit eam imponit in humeros suos gaudens; et veniens domum convocat amicos et vicinos dicens illis: Congratulamini mihi quia invenio ovem quæ perierat.* And fearing lest the sense of this ineffable parable should not be understood by every one,

the Saviour Jesus adds these words, which ought to speak so forcibly to the heart of every Priest. *Dico vobis, quòd ità gaudium erit in cœlo super uno peccatore pœnitentiam agente, quàm super nonaginta novem justis qui non indigent pœnitentiâ.*

With these divine instructions before us, what becomes of the strange excuse made above? "I make no especial effort, it is true, for the salvation of the poor, but I do quite as much for that class as I do for the others." God grant that you may not receive as an answer hereafter that you have done too little for all! But above all, what is the force of those words, which seem to drop so heavily from frozen lips! "If our poor wish to be saved, nothing prevents them; their pastor is ready to receive them, whenever they choose to come to his arms."

Let us recapitulate with exactness the various considerations which oblige the shepherds of souls to labor particularly for the conversion of sinners of the poorer class. We might say to these pastors, you ought to have a peculiar zeal for the poor: 1. Because they are in an especial manner the members of Jesus Christ, and the most exact copies of that Divine Original. 2. Because they are, particularly in spiritual matters, deprived of all assistance. 3. Because you have great influence over them. 4. Because you have not only influence over them, but a very widely-extended authority, in consequence of the daily kindnesses they receive from you, kindnesses of which they know you can deprive them, if they behave ill. 5. Because you can talk to them with the greatest ease, without beating about the bush, or using any sort of reserve. 6. Because, perhaps, having never seen their pastor take a single step for their conversion, they will be struck with your earnestness, and will receive your advice with gratitude. 7. Because if you do not go to them, they will never come to you, not daring to enter the parsonage, nor even the church, in

the rags which they wear, and for that reason having no intercourse with their Curé, except during the short time they stand waiting at his door for alms. Such are the motives which, in addition to the general reasons set forth above, make it incumbent upon you to have recourse, for the salvation of these poor creatures, to the means we now point out.

241. Your first task, when you would undertake the moral improvement of the poorer class, should be to make a general visit to all the poor of your parish. Do not say that you know them well enough, and that this visit will be useless. You are mistaken; on the contrary, such a visit will have many beneficial results, and will bring to your knowledge many facts of which you would otherwise remain entirely ignorant.

Accompanied by some one who is thoroughly acquainted with the poor, and the places where they dwell, a zealous Curé should himself make a general inspection of all his poor. He will be careful not to give such an inspection the appearance of prying; his aim will rather be to show that his visit is one of good-will, zeal, and interest. He will be kind, courteous, tender, and fatherly; he will make various inquiries, in order to acquaint himself with their most pressing needs. He will observe the poor furniture of their dwellings. He will ascertain if there are beds enough to enable the whole family to sleep with proper regard to decency, without that intermingling of the sexes, which is so dangerous and so common. He will ask the number and the ages of the children, what they can do, and what they actually do. He will learn whether the parents work, and what is the average amount of their earnings. He will also endeavor to ascertain whether they receive any private assistance.

Then will follow questions about religious matters: Do you say your prayers? Do you go to church on Sundays? We scarcely ever see you there; to which mass do you go, then? Are you regular at the sacraments? Who is

your confessor? Do you send your children regularly to the catechism? Do you give them good advice and good example? Do you strictly forbid their associating with bad companions? You will not fail to put in your observations and suggestions on these various points, adding even firm remonstrances, if necessary, yet always letting it be seen that under this firmness there lies a vast depth of gentleness and charity.

As it must inevitably happen that after the visit you will soon forget all you have ascertained, it is necessary to carry a note-book, and to write down at each house a sort of brief yet exact statement of all the information obtained. This done, you should close the visit by a short exhortation in words of as much earnestness as possible, and, what we always like, you may say before leaving: "My dear friends, I do not attach any very great importance to my blessing, but nevertheless the blessing of the pastor can but bring good to his flock. Kneel down, my children, and your father will bless you."

Now, will any one still say that such a visit paid at every poor person's house, in this spirit of gentleness, zeal, and compassionate charity, will be without effect? Believe it who will; for ourselves we are profoundly convinced of the contrary.

242. It is certain that, in towns especially, the poor who proclaim themselves such, and who, to support their character, never appear publicly except in rags, scarcely ever attend the public service of their parish church; and this is a great evil.

In fact, hearing only low masses all the year round, and often attending none at all, they are entirely cut off from hearing the word of God; and as, on the other hand, they cannot read, and cannot supply the place of sermons by religious books, we may judge of their ignorance in religious matters, especially as they were so irregular in attending the catechetical instructions in

their childhood, forced as they were to go out begging whenever their parents imposed this hard task upon them. Such an alienation from the church and its public services is most detrimental to the salvation of the poor, and every zealous Curé should do his utmost to remedy this serious evil.

With this view he should use every effort to obtain from the rich some clothing, of coarse material certainly, but yet neat and decent, for Sundays and festivals; for their wretched tatters are always pleaded as their excuse, when they are reproached with never assisting at the solemnities of the Church. We must stimulate the zeal of the rich on this point, and convince them that this kind of charity is as perfect as any, since it is at once corporal and spiritual. When, by these means, the poor are provided with decent clothing, the Curé must personally, or through others, take measures to prevent their selling the clothes or wearing them on week days.

Another means of promoting the attendance of the poor at divine worship is to assign them a particular place in the church, reserved for them alone. By their account, if they do not come to our services, it is because they do not know where to sit, not having the means of paying for chairs, and every seat being already occupied by those who do pay. To remove this objection, the Curé should come to an understanding with the vestry, and use all his influence, that a certain number of short benches, proportioned to the number of poor in the parish, should be reserved exclusively for them. It is true that this involves a pecuniary sacrifice; (for we need hardly say these seats must be free;) but this sacrifice is absolutely necessary. The church is for all the faithful, rich and poor; and these last would be virtually excluded, if compelled to pay for their seats.

There is in many churches an intolerable abuse in this respect. Under the pretext that the expenses of the service are enormous, the poor are fleeced unmercifully;

whereas it would be much better not to display a pomp, running sometimes almost into profanity, which is exceedingly costly, and which prevents the poor from enjoying the spiritual advantages to which they have a right.

When the Curé has obtained a particular place for the poor, he should inform them of it immediately, and enjoin them to attend regularly on Sundays and festivals; whether they do or not may be easily ascertained, since they will no longer be scattered all over the church, but collected together in one place. The better to induce them to attend the public services, he must not fail to tell them that the rich will be edified by their diligent attendance, and much more anxious to help them, knowing their alms are bestowed upon the deserving poor.

243. If what we have suggested be carried out, it will, without doubt, be in itself a great blessing to the poor.

Nevertheless, a zealous Curé will not stop here. General instruction given to the parishioners under the form of elaborate discourses, or more familiar sermons, is undoubtedly very good and very useful to those who hear them; but how many things there are, especially applicable to the poor, which are not said in these sermons, and which, nevertheless, it is most important that they should hear! These things, we know, could not be said to the poor in the presence of those who assist them.

In fact, if the vices of the poor were exposed before the latter, in their dark reality, it is evident that the zeal of the rich would grow cold, and their charity, already languishing, would become feebler and colder still.

These considerations induced a Curé of our acquaintance to adopt the following course in a town where such a demonstration of zeal had never before been seen in practice. His superiors having confided to him the care of a parish crowded with poor, he determined to assemble them in the church some day when there was no public service. He called them together, and appointed

the day and hour of assembling. He had prepared the chapel of the Blessed Virgin for their reception, and when they were all assembled, he sent the other parishioners out, and the doors remained shut throughout the service. To make sure that all should attend, he had given notice, in summoning them, that before they left, there would be a distribution of alms; so that the meeting was at the fullest.

Great was the curiosity, for our Curé had not told them what he intended to do. He took his place at the altar of the Blessed Virgin vested for the celebration of mass, and then announced that he would offer the august Sacrifice in their behalf, and would afterwards preach them a sermon. He urged upon them quiet and earnest attention, lively devotion, and thorough desire to profit by the grace they might receive. His recommendation produced all the effect he expected. The behavior of his congregation was perfect, and he reckoned this day as one of the happiest of his life.

In his address he began by informing them why he had assembled them, and why he had separated them from the rest of the faithful. His reasons for this being entirely for their good, were fully appreciated, and the way thus prepared, he enumerated, one by one, all the charges usually brought against them; he showed them that these charges were generally well founded, and that all their spiritual and temporal interest required a change of conduct. Next, he reminded them, as incentives for such a change, of the great truths of religion; strongly insisting on this point, that it was really the height of folly for those who were already so miserable in this world, to draw down upon themselves misery still more terrible in the next.

This meeting produced the happiest results, and the Curé was intending to renew it periodically; but being called by his superiors to other duties, it was not possible for him to carry out his project.

Reverend brethren, if God inspires you with the wish to attempt for yourselves this experiment of zeal, *nolite obdurare corda vestra*; and be very sure that you will thus bring down upon your ministry floods of blessings, since it is certain that the Divine Saviour regards as done to Himself, whatever we do unto the least of His children: *quamdiù fecistis uni ex minimis meis mihi fecistis*.*

244. Will it be permitted to us to go a few steps further? Well; why not? Oh! when we are pleading the cause of Christ's poor, we must not allow ourselves to be fettered by a foolish timidity.

If there is in the Church of God an assured means of salvation, a powerful lever, irresistible for raising up the most heavily burdened souls, it is certainly either a great mission, or, at least, a short mission, such as is known by the name of *retreat*. Those only who have made one, can tell the immense benefit resulting from it. Be assured that those who decry these eminently apostolic works, are no more worthy of belief than a man blind from his birth, when he declaims, expatiates, and pronounces upon colors, of which he cannot form the slightest possible notion in his own mind.

We repeat that there is nothing more useful than preaching a retreat; this is done everywhere for the different classes of society: in the cathedral towns, for priests; in the greater and lesser seminaries; in religious communities; in boarding-schools, for both sexes; in houses of retreat for men; in houses of retreat for

* This was written before I had the great happiness of learning that there existed in Paris an admirable institution, known by the name of "*Œuvre de la Ste. Famille*," which is wonderfully efficient among the poor, and which provides for this class of persons the advantage of such periodical meetings as these we have just described.

I recommend my pious readers to procure for themselves a little book, in which there is an account of the good works of every kind which spring up in the midst of Paris, and which produce such noble results of zeal and charity.

women; in hospitals; in ordinary churches for the faithful at large; in the prisons even, where, for some years past, zealous priests have been journeying from one end of France to the other, to preach the gospel to criminals; everywhere, we repeat it, and to every class of society, spiritual retreats are given, and they produce marvellous fruits.

Why then should the poor, who, perhaps, need them more than any others, be the only class deprived of this benefit? The thing is certainly possible, and we guarantee its success. Early in the morning, and at a latish hour in the evening, we would assemble them by themselves in the church. By this arrangement their work would not be interrupted.

Further, it would be well, some time before this retreat, to make an appeal to the rich, in order to be able every day, or at least two or three times, during the retreat, to divide a small sum among the poor.

It would be useful to call in one or more missionaries for this good work; but if this were impossible, the retreat might be undertaken by the Curé himself, with the help of some of his brethren in preaching and confession.

It is scarcely possible to imagine the detailed and thoroughly appropriate instructions which might be given to the poor during such a week? It is hardly possible to imagine what conversions might be wrought, and what comfort a pastor would derive, even from those who now occasion him only weariness and anxiety! It is hardly possible to imagine the increased zeal of the devout laity in aid of the poor, who, instead of vices, would henceforth manifest in their conduct only edifying virtues! Then it is we might enjoy the pleasing reflection that we have faithfully fulfilled our duty as pastors, and could appear with well-grounded confidence before the tribunal of our Sovereign Judge.

CHAPTER XII.

INTERCOURSE WITH THE SICK.

245. WE have very often remarked that the zeal of a pastor in visiting the sick infallibly conciliates for him the esteem and affection of his flock. When he flies to them at the least signal, when he accosts them with those marks of devotedness and compassionate charity with which a lively faith always inspires the soul of a holy priest, they admire his fervor, magnify his zeal, and rejoice to have him for a pastor. And let it be remarked, that it is not only the sick who admire such conduct; it is also their relations and friends, as well as all those who witness it.

It is therefore essential to acquire a good reputation in this respect in the parish. The way to do so is to give out, at all times and places, but more especially in the pulpit, that we are both by night and by day at the disposal of our flock; that those who are sick must never wait until their illness becomes serious to inform their pastor of it; for that we would rather make ten useless journeys than omit one which might be necessary; that nothing could give us more pain than to think that our parishioners were unduly anxious lest they should, under such circumstances, seem to be importunate.

Another mode of acquiring this valuable reputation is never to utter a murmur, and to appear composed and cheerful whenever called to sick persons, in order that it may not be supposed that our visit is a burdensome task. There are priests to be found who are not very edifying in this respect. When they are summoned to receive a sick man's confession, instead of setting off immediately, they delay their departure, asking question

after question, to ascertain if the sickness be as serious as it is represented; they say reproachfully, that the priest is almost always sent for when there is really little the matter with the invalid, and that the other occupations of the ministry are thereby interfered with, etc. They desire to know exactly what the doctor thinks of the patient; and sometimes, upon the imperfect explanations elicited, they undertake to prove that the illness is by no means of a serious character.

What is the result of all this? People in the parish, seeing that they are always badly received at the parsonage when they go to ask for spiritual aid for the sick, determine not to go until the latest possible moment, and, alas! sometimes too late for the eternal salvation of the soul. Hence arises serious discontent, reproaches, and murmurs, against the negligence of the pastor, who often on his part pays dearly in the depth of his conscience for the deplorable idleness which has caused him to commit faults, the consequences of which are so terrible in the eyes of the faithful.

246. That which should endear this exercise of zeal to us is the consideration of its high importance. To procure eternal salvation for the poor and dying, or to expose them by his negligence to the danger of eternal damnation, such is the alternative which should always be present to the mind of a priest when he is called to a sick person. If our holy ministry is under all circumstances supremely useful to souls, it may be said that in this case it is almost always not only useful, but absolutely necessary for reconciling sinners in a state of reprobation to God, who, seldom possessing true contrition, cannot expect salvation but through the charitable intervention of their pastor, and the sacraments which he administers to them.

How consoling it is to a good Priest to pay assiduous attention to a sick person, and to perceive that he responds to the zeal of his pastor by the expression of a

lively gratitude, and, what is still better, by the abundant tears which he sheds at the remembrance of the sins he has just confessed! What joy for the friends and relatives, in the midst of the grief which overwhelms them, to be able to hope that Divine justice is appeased, and that mercy triumphs! And what a flood of benedictions is poured upon the worthy minister of Jesus Christ, who comes like a consoling angel, to pour a healing balm into the poor wounded hearts whose groans and sighs he hears around him! How sweet the conviction, when one of the sheep of his flock breathes his last sigh, that he has spared nothing to procure for him eternal salvation, and that he has cared for his soul as he would desire his own soul to be cared for under the like circumstances!

What grief, on the contrary, what distress, what remorse of conscience, if detained by a deplorable idleness, or by a cold indifference, or, perhaps, by the attraction of a frivolous conversation, or a party of pleasure, he were to arrive at the bedside of a dying person some minutes after he had lost the use of his intellectual faculties without a prospect of their return, sometimes even after he has breathed his last!

For a priest, a man of faith, I know nothing more poignant than the reflection, "there is a soul that I have more reason to believe is lost than saved; and if it be damned, it is I who am the cause of it; it is my neglect which has produced this frightful and irremediable misfortune."

247. With these terrible facts staring us in the face, let us resolve to sacrifice everything rather than incur the dreadful reproach of having compromised the salvation of one single soul. Let us promise to God, and firmly resolve to ourselves, to redouble our zeal with regard to the sick, to be constantly with them, regardless of every obstacle, prompted by the holy eagerness of a lively faith and a burning love.

But shall we always obtain admittance to these sick people, so deserving of our care and commiseration? Glad should we be to be able to answer this question in a satisfactory manner; but, alas! everybody knows that the divine ministry of the Priest is not unfrequently refused, and that, under circumstances where the necessity of it is most indispensable. Sometimes it is the sick person himself who, through his unbelief, or indifference to his eternal salvation, or from ignorance of the serious character of his illness, refuses to receive the visit of his pastor. Sometimes, and more commonly, the parents or friends, fearing that the sight of a Priest will be regarded by the sick person as the indication of approaching death, take upon themselves to put off an interview, to which they will not consent until the poor dying person is no longer in a state to derive any benefit from it.

But whatever may be the obstacles which present themselves to a pastor's zeal, and from whatever quarter they may arise, we think it right to give the following advice, which, if duly followed, will smooth the way, and render access to such sick persons comparatively easy. We speak of the visits which a Curé should be in the habit of paying to his parishioners, and more especially to those whom he fears he may be unable to approach when they are laboring under a malady which endangers their life.

He should be well acquainted with such of his parishioners as are least attentive to their religious duties, and who, according to all outward appearances, are likely to refuse all spiritual aid in the last moments. When he has ascertained exactly who among his parishioners are so disposed, he should from time to time pay them a visit of courtesy, in order that afterwards, in the moment of danger, they may still receive as a visit of this nature one which he himself regards very differently.

It may easily be imagined that a man who has never received a visit from his Curé, and who finds him come

in all haste in the time of sickness; it may easily be imagined, I say, that he regards the visit as the indication of serious danger. His relations and friends, who are generally more concerned for the illness of the body than for that of the soul, are pretty sure to think that the presence of the Curé, being an extraordinary event in the house, will of itself alarm the sick person, by causing him to believe that he is in imminent danger.

Now all this would be avoided if the Curé had, previous to the illness of his parishioner, been accustomed from time to time to pay him a friendly visit. His presence at the time of sickness would not alarm the family; on the contrary, the patient would consider it quite natural that the Curé, who visited him when he was in health, should come to inquire after him when he was ill.

Nothing, therefore, is more advantageous than the custom of visiting the sinners of the parish, to whom it is to be feared we shall not be able to obtain access in case they are attacked by serious illness. Let us avoid the practice of some Curés, who make a point of visiting only the pious members of their flock, and never visit those who, devoid of all religion, have evidently more need than the former of their assiduity and zeal.

248. A deplorable abuse, as regards the subject-matter of this chapter, is delay in visiting the sick until it is too late. We might almost say (though doubtless such is not the case, but judging from the negligence of certain priests in this respect, we might say), that to avoid the embarrassment of a difficult confession they wait until the sick person is no longer in a condition to make one. We are satisfied that they are not actuated by considerations of this nature, but we say that if they were, they would not act otherwise than they do. When we hear that the illness is in the least degree serious, it is as well to go, always taking care to let it be seen that the object of the visit is to ascertain the state of the sick person, not to render him the last duties. The first time we might

even be satisfied with inquiring after his health, without seeing him, adding, that we will soon return to pay him a short visit. This will certainly be reported to the invalid, who, being thus prepared, will almost always receive his pastor with pleasure.

249. If there be nothing very serious, and no immediate danger, it is generally advisable on the first visit to say but little about religious matters. A few edifying words, introduced without effort, will ordinarily suffice. But the priest should show great regard and interest towards the invalid; he should listen with attention to the long story of his sufferings and discomforts (this is so pleasing to sick people). He should even indirectly induce this recital, by asking how the illness commenced, what occasioned it, etc., and then he should manifest sympathy with him, and express a hope for his speedy recovery.

The first visit, if thus paid, will certainly pave the way for a second, in which he will be able to say many things, which would have been out of place in the first. He should not fail to announce to the invalid before he leaves him, his intention of paying this second visit, in order that he may be prepared for it, and that it may make no unpleasant impression upon him.

250. If the above recommendations be strictly followed, it will but seldom happen (at least in countries where faith still prevails) that the ministrations of the priest will be formally rejected. But if, for want of following the rules we have laid down, or from any other cause, the friends or relatives of the invalid oppose the visit of the pastor, he must employ all the resources of his zeal to persuade them to admit him. Thus, for example, it would be well to say to them, that nothing is more natural than that a pastor should visit the sheep of his flock when they are ill; that such visits do not make nearly so fearful an impression as they suppose, and, besides, that he will take every precaution to avoid any-

thing in the least degree calculated to alarm the sick person; that he will even make his visit appear to be one of mere courtesy; that, moreover, experience proves, and medical men agree, that the presence of the priest, his pious exhortations, and the spiritual aid that he administers, so far from *killing the patient*, as some people say, produce, on the contrary, a peaceful frame of mind, the happy effects of which powerfully assist the remedies of the physician.

These observations, uttered in a tone of earnestness, and accompanied by demonstrations of affectionate interest, will often produce the happiest results. If, however, it should be otherwise, it would be necessary to go a little further, and show, with moderation at first, but afterwards with energy, that nothing less than the salvation of the soul is involved; that as pastor of the parish, we are responsible to God for this soul; that the illness, already serious, may at any moment become still more so, and too serious, perhaps, to allow of spiritual help being efficaciously applied; that we must not, through any chimerical fears, bring upon ourselves or the sick eternal regret; nay, sometimes, as a last effort of zeal, we must not fear to tell these cruelly obstinate relatives that the illness is unfortunately more serious than they imagine; that if the doctor reassures the sick person and those around him, he gives them hopes which he does not entertain himself; that we have made it our business to ascertain, before we took any formal step, what the doctor really thought of the state of the sick person, and that it is because we know he is beyond all human aid that we so urgently entreat them to apply remedies of another and a spiritual nature.

We might, also, in certain circumstances, speak as follows to the afflicted relatives whose faith is sound, and who at heart are distressed in refusing the succors of religion, while they fully admit its necessity: "It gives me much pain, my dear afflicted friends, to speak these

words. Oh! that I could restore to you him whom you are in danger of losing! Unhappily that is beyond my power, but what I cannot do for the body, I can do for the soul. Remember, if you permit your relative to die in a state of sin, your very faith will be your punishment; yes, I forewarn you, that you will shudder as long as you live at the thought that to prolong his life a few days, or even a few hours, you sacrificed his soul, and compromised his eternal salvation. A purely human affection extinguishes in you at this moment the light of faith; but when this affection shall have grown cold, when reason and faith, for a time eclipsed, shall have recovered their place, you will not have tears enough to weep for the fault you now commit in thus preventing me from discharging the most sacred of my duties."

If these various means do not produce any advantageous result, the priest must retire; but on taking leave, he should inform them that he will return to hear how the invalid fares, and make a further effort for his salvation. Previous to this second visit it will be of the greatest advantage to pray, and to ask the prayers of devout persons, to offer the Holy Sacrifice, and to impose upon himself some penance, in order to soften the Divine justice; following the example of many saints, who, by these means, have obtained the conversion of the most hardened sinners.

251. Under these painful circumstances, it is advantageous to speak in private with the pious souls who are about the sick man, and minister to his wants. What happiness, if these souls, imbued with the precautions of true zeal of which we have already spoken, could induce him, of his own accord, to ask for the priest whom his friends and relations have obstinately repulsed. Ah! it is certain that, in that case, every obstacle would be removed, and the relations themselves would rejoice at so happy a result.

The priest, therefore, should not fail to act in concert,

either with some friends in the house, or with some of the servants, nurses, Sisters of Charity, or others, who would prepare the way, and work effectually for the salvation of a poor soul suspended, without the least anxiety it may be, over eternal fires.

252. It sometimes happens that the relatives of the sick person do not themselves oppose the interview which the pastor solicits; but it is the sick person himself who refuses the proffered visit. What is to be done in this lamentable case?

If there be on his part a positive and obstinate refusal, which nothing can overcome, perhaps the priest, in spite of this sad opposition, might present himself, particularly if the danger of death were imminent; but if, as is probable, he is formally and angrily repulsed, he must then content himself with urging the relatives, the friends, and the pious souls who surround this unhappy being, to act with all the industry of zeal, and then to have recourse to spiritual means, to prayer, to good works, to the Holy Sacrifice, and even, as has already been recommended, to bodily penances, so effectual in touching the heart of God, when a pastor imposes them upon himself to save a sheep of his flock.

It sometimes happens that one of these hardened sinners resolves to receive the visit of a priest; only he takes care to announce that it is merely as a friend, and not as a Confessor that he consents to see him. It is scarcely necessary to say that, notwithstanding this restriction, so painful to the heart of a priest, he must not hesitate to go immediately to the sick person; for, very often, the visit of a friend may pave the way for the ministry of the confessor.

When he comes to the bedside he should redouble his precautions to say nothing which may cause annoyance. He should endeavor to win his affections, or, at least, his esteem, by lively and sincere evidences of the most tender interest; and, if the danger is urgent, approach the deli-

cate point, and endeavor, with angelic sweetness, to dispel his prejudices against a confession which would procure for him such abundant consolation if he would but resolve to make it.

Unhappily, it will sometimes occur that, on the first overture that is made on this point, the priest will be reduced to silence by certain words, so firmly expressed that a new attempt will be most difficult; notwithstanding, it may be possible for him, but still with the greatest caution, to return to the charge, to pray, to conjure, to supplicate, and even to weep, if Divine mercy at the moment grants him tears, and, at length, as a last resource, to sound in the ears of the hardened sinner the fearful menaces of an avenging God, into Whose hands he is about to fall; yet, taking care not to do so in a chiding and angry tone of voice, but with a holy energy of zeal, tempered with gentleness and lively compassion.

If these means do not produce the desired effect the Priest will, at least, be able to call God to witness that he has fully discharged his duty as a pastor, and sorrowfully console himself in meditating upon the following words of the prophet Ezechiel: *Si annuntiaveris impio, et ille non fuerit conversus ab impietate suâ, et a viâ suâ impiâ, ipse quidem in impietate suâ morietur; tu autem animam tuam liberasti.* "If thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul" (Ezechiel iii. 19).

253. Some learned and zealous priests have recourse to an ingenious method of bringing to confession any sick persons who object to it. It consists in making them confess without their being aware of it. After the ordinary preliminaries with which every conversation is opened, they advance step by step to religious ground, and endeavor to induce the sick person to speak of his whole past conduct in its religious bearings. The priest says, with a smile on his countenance, that probably he is not

very strong on this point; that perhaps he has almost made shipwreck of his faith; that he seldom or never prayed, that it is long since he was present at Mass, and that he has troubled himself but little with the commandments of the Church, etc.

Then, after some short digressions, he passes on to his conduct towards his neighbor, and, at length, to his conduct towards himself; always in the form of conversation, and in a familiar and amiable manner. It is evident that, the conversation turning upon such topics as those, a general knowledge of the spiritual state of the sick person is obtained, and this knowledge enables the priest to say to him, with more or less freedom, according to circumstances, that confession need not alarm him, since he has already made it unconsciously. Very often he will laugh at this innocent trick, and consent to finish in earnest that which he began in a joke. Of course the priest will rectify in the serious confession all that requires to be set right. The essential point was to induce the sinner to confess.

No doubt this pious artifice cannot always be employed. Every priest must determine for himself when he can resort to it with the chance of success.

254. If the obstacle to confession be removed, or if there be no obstacle to remove, what course ought the priest to adopt with the sick man, when he finds himself at his bedside?

After having observed the precautions indicated above (sect. 222), he very quietly introduces the subject of confession, and if it be necessary, dispels in a few words the unreasonable prejudices which are entertained against this religious institution, so infinitely more consoling than painful. Besides, experience teaches us that the most difficult thing is to get near the sick person; for when the priest is alone with him, he almost always accepts, and even with eagerness, the spiritual aid offered.

In most cases it is desirable to proceed with the con-

fession as far as may be, at the first interview, taking care not to fatigue the invalid and increase his fever, by fixing his attention for too long a time.

If it is impossible to finish the confession at the first visit, and there is reason to fear that the malady will make serious and sudden progress, the Priest must not fail to dispose the sick person for absolution, even before he has heard the whole of his confession, if his condition does not admit of its being brought to an end at once. It must not be forgotten that, under these circumstances, an entire confession is not necessary, and that the priest can, nay, ought to, give absolution, although there are many mortal sins still to be declared; care being taken to supply the deficiency in subsequent confessions, if the state of the sick person admits of it. It would even be very wrong to exhaust his strength by a multiplicity of questions, and by a very lengthened confession, so as to be unable to dispose him to contrition. Let it never be forgotten that a full confession is not always necessary, but that contrition is absolutely indispensable.

255. What we have said hitherto relates especially to those sick persons who have no religion, and in whom faith is so weakened, if not extinguished, that one hardly knows how to obtain for them the blessing of a Christian death.

Most frequently these persons belong to the higher ranks of society, and that, again, is another difficulty for certain priests, who are naturally timid, and fear to approach a man of rank, especially when it is their duty to announce that it is time for him to prepare to meet his God.

When this timidity is excessive, and when we are acquainted with any other Priest in the parish, or in the neighborhood, who is less timid and less embarrassed, especially if there is reason to believe that he is beloved and esteemed by the invalid, we must not fail to propose him or cause him to be proposed by the relatives and

friends; for when it is a question of saving a soul about to perish, it is not the time to listen to the suggestions of a vain self-esteem, the results of which might prove so deplorable.

256. As to the mass of the faithful, a priest does not in general experience any embarrassment. Doubtless, he must always use discretion, caution, and delicacy; but it is seldom that he meets with any serious difficulties.

Sometimes we feel a difficulty in deciding whether we ought formally to announce to the sick man that he is at the point of death, or whether we ought to leave him in ignorance of the fact. Our opinion on this important point is as follows. If he is perfectly conscious of his condition; if he is not even in the least degree distressed thereat, and if he is piously submissive and resigned to the will of God, there is no difficulty. But if he is ignorant of the seriousness of his illness; if he does not consider it fatal, and if, so far as he himself is concerned, everything betokens that he entertains the hope of recovery, it is not absolutely necessary to deprive him of this hope at once, provided (note this well) that he consents to confess, to communicate, and to receive Extreme Unction, if the danger should become more serious.

But perhaps it will be said, how is it possible to administer the Viaticum, or Extreme Unction, without depriving him of the hope of recovery? We admit that sometimes this hope may certainly be somewhat weakened when the last Sacraments are proposed; nevertheless, with tact and caution, these things may be done in such a manner as to create no excessive alarm.

For example, we might say that these Sacraments have often produced even for the body the most salutary effects; that Extreme Unction, in particular, was instituted not only for the good of the soul, but also for the cure of the body, when in the designs of God such recovery is more favorable than hurtful to salvation; we might add, if we were really acquainted with facts of

this nature, that, in the course of our ministry, we had fallen in with more than one sick person who was despaired of, and who never began to mend until the moment in which he received the last aids of religion. These and other like considerations will almost always induce a sick person to receive the Sacraments when they may be proposed to him.

257. Moreover, we cannot too strongly urge the not waiting until the last moment before administering the Holy Eucharist and Extreme Unction. These Sacraments, so fruitful in grace, in order that they may produce their wonderful effects in all their fulness, ought to be received when the sick person is in the full possession of his intellectual faculties.

A zealous pastor ought to neglect nothing in order to provide for the souls of those intrusted to his care all the spiritual aid which he is bound by his office to administer to them in the last stage of their existence; and he would incur a fearful responsibility before God, if, from cowardly fear or culpable negligence, he were to deprive them of the means of salvation which he is bound to employ in their behalf.

258. There is an abuse against which we ought to set our faces strenuously. We too often find the sick abandoned by their Confessor after he has given them the last Sacraments. Some priests, in their hurry, jumble together Confession, Communion, Extreme Unction, and Indulgence, *in articulo mortis*, in order to be able to breathe a little freely and to sleep tranquilly. They take great care to calm the uneasiness of the relations by telling them nothing more can be done, that they have given the sick person all the spiritual aid of which he stood in need, and that it will now be sufficient to suggest to him from time to time sentiments of confidence and resignation.

However, several days, a week, perhaps a fortnight, elapses, and the sick person still lives. He grows weaker,

gradually, but slowly; he has a great desire to see his Confessor again, perhaps he even requests his relations to send for him; but they, fearing to seem importunate, believing, moreover, that his presence is no longer necessary, seeing that he has administered all the Sacraments to the sick person, reassure him, and cause him to hope that his Confessor will no doubt come to see him again ere long. Nevertheless this visit is never made; the sick man is left to himself. Perhaps, alas! as is often the case, some serious sins have been brought to his recollection which he longs to confess: who knows (and such examples are not wanting), if he has not kept back, through timidity, some enormous sin, which he would be quite disposed to reveal to his Confessor, if he had the happiness of seeing him.

In any case what a blessing it would be to him to be encouraged and strengthened by pious exhortations against the assaults of the devil, who sometimes, at the near approach of death, makes incredible efforts to torment the soul with frightful terrors, and even to drive it into despair.

To depend upon relations and friends in such circumstances is very often pure delusion. It is therefore the Confessor's part to cause the voice of zeal and piety to be heard; it is he who ought, as much as possible, to render, even to the last moment, the duty demanded of him by the soul confided to his care. Alas! that soul is about to enter into eternity. Can it ever be too well prepared to appear before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge?

259. In these last visits which we are recommending, the sick ought always to be asked if he does not desire a private interview. If he has nothing to say, and requires only to be comforted, short Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity, Contrition, submission to the Will of God, should be suggested to him; for long exhortations fatigue sick people, and are of little use to them.

The priest will do well to put into his hand a small Crucifix, which he will recommend him to kiss from time to time, saying from the bottom of his heart, "O my Jesus, I love Thee with all my soul, increase in me Thy holy love.—O my Jesus, I am content to suffer for Thee, who hast suffered so much for me.—O my Jesus, I unite my sufferings to Thine, apply to me the merit of all Thy sorrows.—O my Jesus, I cheerfully sacrifice my life unto Thee, I join my death to Thy death, have mercy on my great misery.—I am Thine, O Jesus, wholly Thine for time and for eternity.—Holy Mary, my tender mother, pray for me.—My patron Saints, pray for me.—Holy Angel, who wast chosen to strengthen and console Jesus in His agony, strengthen and comfort me;" etc.

We can scarcely imagine how plenteously these short aspirations, when recommended by a pious and zealous priest, produce grace and consolation.

It is also a very good thing to endeavor to induce the sick to perform acts of perfect charity. We can sometimes tell them, without fatiguing them, that there are acts of love so perfect, that they immediately obtain a total remission of the temporal pains that they would have to undergo in purgatory. Say to them, that for that purpose they must constrain themselves to love God for Himself alone, on account of His loveliness and infinite perfections, much more than on account of the benefits they receive at His hands.

Among the devout may be found many souls capable of appreciating these high considerations; and when you see that they comprehend them and manifest a desire to love God as they have now been taught to love Him, make an act of perfect charity with them, pronouncing it very slowly, dwelling on each word, and even adding a short commentary, if it be thought requisite. This act may also with great advantage be broken up into portions, and put in the way of questions; as, for example, "You love God very much: do you not, my child?"—"Yes,

father.”—“You love him with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, do you not?”—“Oh! yes, father!”—“It is not only because God has done you good that you love Him, but also because He is infinitely good in Himself, supremely lovely, and altogether perfect. It is above all for that you love Him, is it not, my child?”—“Yes, father.”

Should it happen that the sick person has not yet attained to the highest degree of charity, it is well to bid him ask God for it, especially through the intercession of Mary, saying, for example, “O my God, I have an earnest desire to be filled with perfect charity; I beseech Thee, O God, to grant it to me, if I do not already possess it. O Mary, Mother of perfect love, obtain for me perfect charity.”

It is advisable, before leaving the house, to recommend the nurses to suggest anew to the sick person some of those acts of charity just alluded to; always adding that, if he shows the least desire to confess, they must not fail to send word to the parsonage.

260. Well! were we not right in saying that a good and charitable pastor, who lavished upon the sick the assiduous cares of his zeal was infallibly beloved and blessed by his flock? Is it possible that visits always made with this holy anxiety, this absolute devotion, this tender piety which men so much love to find in a pastor, should not conciliate for him the esteem, veneration and attachment of all the sheep of his fold?

Courage, then, good and faithful servants, multiply yourselves, so to speak, by the holy ardor of your charity. Open, open wide the gates of Paradise to the many souls of which you are the second redeemers, and who will repay you with glory in heaven the good you have done them upon earth.

CHAPTER XIII.

INTERCOURSE WITH THE AFFLICTED.

261. THIS is an exercise of zeal which unhappily is not sufficiently often put in practice, although its great advantage cannot be disputed.

We say frequently, and it is but too true, that the world and the friends formed in the world's school do not love groans and tears. The more eager these false friends are in running after amusements and pleasures, the colder and more heartless are they when called upon to pour consolation into a poor wounded heart.

Abandoned by all the world, without a single friend he who thought he had so many; overwhelmed by the weight of trouble brought on by the calamity that has just befallen him; alone, entirely alone, with the grief which devours him without a moment's respite; tempted, it may be, to put a sinful end to an existence which the enemy of his salvation represents to him as supremely painful and miserable, what will become of this unhappy wretch? Ah! how much he needs to find, what as yet he has not, a friendly hand, that would affectionately grasp his failing hand, a generous and devoted heart, to comprehend his sorrow, and assuage it by sharing it with him! Now who shall console this desolate sheep, if it be not the pastor appointed for him by God? It is his to take the place of these perfidious friends, who think of nothing but enjoying themselves, whilst their friend of yesterday is in tears. Hasten, hasten, merciful pastor, and be assured that you will have no cause to regret the work of charity that zeal prompts you to undertake.

262. If, under these circumstances, the voice of our heart were not sufficient to determine us to take this step,

let us reflect upon the admirable example that our Divine Saviour so often set us in this respect during His mortal life. Was it towards the palaces of the rich and the happy that He turned His steps? Had the amusements and the pleasures of the world any attraction for Him?

Ah! the bare questions are an affront to Him. No! it was not pleasure that attracted Him; it was affliction and tears which won His Heart overflowing with compassion. This good, this tender Jesus saw into every sorrow, and never failed to meet it with a flood of ineffable consolation. "In passing through the villages," says Bossuet, "every one said, 'But how is this? we no longer meet with any afflicted, any deaf, lame, or sick persons.' 'Ah! no,' was the reply, 'the good Jesus has passed by.' *Pertransiit benefaciendo*. He passed through doing good."

Why, then, should we not frame our conduct upon this Divine Model, we who follow Him so closely in the functions of our august ministry, we whom He has been pleased to choose as His ministers, and who ought to be, in our feelings, our virtues, our words, and our works, His constant and faithful imitators?

263. Besides, is it really burdensome to fulfil the duty of charity that we here recommend? Ah! who has not felt in the inmost depths of his heart that joy, so delightful and so pure, which we experience in carrying unexpected consolation to an afflicted soul? In the agreeable surprise we cause, in the testimonies of gratitude we receive, in the unaffected words springing out of the purest charity, there is an indescribable secret charm which does untold good to the soul. We should pity from the bottom of our heart any one who could not understand our language, or could not comprehend the happiness that is experienced in consoling the afflicted.

And, further, is not this the happy moment for sowing in the heart the Divine seed, the seed of salvation? Probably the soul is never better disposed to profit by any

pious advice which is offered, than when the vanity of the world and the weakness of human aid is thus brought home to it. Then it acknowledges what it had never seen before, that there is nothing solid but virtue, nothing consoling but religion, nothing important but eternal salvation. It is impossible but that it should look upon its pastor as its true friend, since it perceives that its grief alone makes his visit valuable, and that he comes only to console and to sympathize.

But it is not only to the afflicted soul that such a visit will be useful. If he acquires the character of a comforter and father in the parish; if he is prompt to visit those who are in affliction; if he knows how to mourn with them that mourn, and to weep with them that weep, as the Apostle counsels, what excellent effects will not his charity produce among his parishioners, who witness the never-ceasing tenderness of their pastor!

264. Let us conclude from all that has been said above, that as soon as the priest hears that a misfortune of any kind has fallen upon one of his parishioners, it is most becoming, as well as most advantageous, to convey to him as soon as possible those consolations of which he stands in need. We say a misfortune of any kind, because otherwise it might be supposed that we had only in view the poignant grief which is experienced upon the loss of some cherished relative. No doubt, this grief is one of the most overwhelming that men have to suffer, and never should a pastor fail, on these mournful occasions, to be one of the first to pay the visit which not only zeal and charity, but even the most ordinary politeness demands at his hands.

Without speaking, then, of this misfortune, with respect to which the conduct of the pastor is clearly defined, how many other afflictions unexpectedly assail our poor humanity! Loss of fortune; loss of reputation; serious, painful, and prolonged illness; family disgrace; bad conduct and ingratitude on the part of a son; pro-

found melancholy, disgust at life, and many other miseries, the enumeration of which would be endless.

Ah! it is in these various circumstances that a holy priest should show that he has the heart of a father, and can sympathize with the troubles of the spiritual family that God has given him. If he did no more than receive the effusions of grief that these poor oppressed hearts pour into his bosom, even that would be much; for it is a great consolation to relate our troubles to a friend who shares them. But if this friend is more than a benevolent and attentive listener, if he shows marks of interest and commiseration, and if he joins to these some mild and paternal exhortations, impressed with the spirit of charity that animates him, God alone knows what happy results will reward the efforts of his zeal, and the inspirations of his charity.

265. What we here recommend is still generally practised with the higher class of society. There are few Curés who do not consider themselves obliged, when any great misfortune happens to a person of this class, to pay a visit of condolence; but, generally speaking, this visit is cold, short, and embarrassed, whereas it ought to have been the very opposite. If a priest does nothing more than the ordinary law of civility and etiquette requires of him, he is no longer the priest, and the pastor is lost in the man of the world.

Let us be sure to bear in mind that on these occasions it is from us, and from us alone, that the sufferers look for the best and most profitable consolations. The especial joy they manifest on seeing us enter, that warm cordiality, those endeavors to detain us if we should seem to wish to go, all serve to show that we have a special mission and grace given to exhort, to console, to strengthen, in a word, to do all that no one else will do if we do not.

Unhappily, a certain timidity, a certain embarrassment, keeps a number of priests in a state of constraint

and uneasiness when they come into contact with great people, and prevents them from saying all that they feel at the bottom of their heart. They say very little, and that little is so vague, so commonplace, and expressed in such an awkward and embarrassed manner, that, notwithstanding their good intentions, their visit is almost useless.

It would be well if the priests, who are habitually affected thus in the presence of persons of the higher ranks, studied to overcome the timidity which ties their tongue, and hinders the fruits of salvation, which, with a little more self-reliance and boldness, they might produce.

We do not require, far from it, that the priest should be a great talker, that he should monopolize the conversation, that he should cut others short, and decide with a certain air of authority, which, misplaced at all times, would be doubly so in the presence of persons of rank. But if a priest should not fall into this culpable excess, neither should he fall into the opposite extreme. (We ask pardon for this digression, and permission to finish it.)

To speak little is a proof of modesty; but to speak scarcely at all is taciturnity, an excess of silence. Let us not, therefore, talk much; but let us talk sufficiently to prevent the conversation from dying out or languishing. If it is being carried on by others, we may avoid taking part in it when it bids fair not to be prolonged; but if it is prolonged, it is proper for us to throw in a few words, were it only to show that we are attending to it, and interested in it. We may, without talking much, study to speak to the purpose; there is a certain freedom, tempered by an undercurrent of grave modesty and amiable frankness, which is most becoming to a priest.

We have known many who certainly did not shine by their superior talents; but who, joining to a high degree of piety this tempered liberty of which we have just

spoken, and enhancing the whole by an air of modesty, goodness, and genuine simplicity, were exceedingly appreciated, even in the most refined society, and never appeared in its assemblies without leaving behind them an impress of their amiable virtue. Such ought to be our standard; with a little tact, discernment, and watchfulness, we may attain to this without much difficulty. How many obstacles more serious than these have been surmounted by a firm will, and a well-sustained application!

266. It is not only with the rich that the priest must exercise his zeal. The middle and lower class have equal right to it; nay, it is certain that the fruits of this work of charity will be even more abundant in these two classes than in the higher.

The rich will be but little surprised at receiving a visit from their pastor in the time of adversity; they know that the law of propriety imposes it upon him as a duty, and, although they may be grateful for the attention, they would possibly consider it strange and uncivil if it were omitted.

But it is not so with the lower classes; with them the visit of the pastor is an unexpected favor which gratifies and flatters them. Especially when he pays this visit at a season of great affliction, and they know that it is precisely on account of this affliction that he pays it, desiring in person to console a family in their grief, who can express the pleasure that it gives, and the marks of gratitude with which he is overwhelmed? Now let us never forget that when a benefactor excites a deep sense of gratitude, he becomes master of the heart which is thus affected towards him.

What fruits of salvation will the revered pastor produce, who shall have acquired for himself a glorious reputation as the comforter of the afflicted! Who will wish, who will be able, to resist him, when, in the overflowings of his zeal, he shall say to the broken-hearted

sheep of his flock, unable to thank him sufficiently for his goodness: "Ah, my good friends, do you wish to prove your gratitude in a manner most useful to yourselves, and infinitely agreeable to me? Give yourselves up to God with your whole heart; and if you are afflicted with manifold trials, at least procure for yourselves that joy of conscience which no misfortune can ever take away."

267. Let us next inquire how a priest should act in order to comfort the afflicted and bereaved. The first thing is to express his pain at hearing of their misfortune, and his desire, if possible, to comfort them. If this first mark of interest is accompanied by that persuasiveness of manner, which shows that the heart is speaking, rather than the lips, they will not fail at once to testify their gratitude, and to confide all their troubles to one who shares them with so much solicitude. Very far from opposing this overflow of grief, he must not fear to encourage, or even to excite it; for one of the secret mysteries of an afflicted soul is a propensity to think, and to think without ceasing, of the trouble which devours it; and as the soul suffers terribly when it can only unfold its sorrows to a cold and unfeeling friend, so, on the contrary, it feels solaced when it can declare everything, and in some degree make a show of its grief to a true and devoted friend.

After this opening of the heart, after the abundant tears with which it will, no doubt, have been accompanied, reason, emerging, as it were, from a cloud, will probably in some measure resume her sway, and this will be the moment to apply the fitting remedy to the wounded spirit.

There are two kinds of consolation, human and divine. Reason suggests the former; Faith the latter. The priest, without doubt, ought to insist upon the consolations of faith. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to reject those which are within the province of reason. He

ought, therefore, to employ both the one and the other, and to dwell particularly upon those which he finds to be most welcome.

He might say, for example, "Ah! I perceive the full extent of your grief! How great is your affliction! Most sincerely do I sympathize with you. How miserable is this poor life! Is it not? With what truth does the Church call it the vale of tears! For, alas! you are not the only sufferer; others have suffered before you; others are suffering with you; and as long as there shall be one human heart upon the earth, pain must be more or less his lot. How many at this very moment, while grief rends and consumes you, are struggling in the pangs and agonies of despair! How many are watching with their tears the lifeless body of some beloved, as the world would say, adored, relative! How many others are enduring frightful diseases, which wring from them night and day the most heart-rending cries!

"The world has but little comfort for these unfortunates; besides, its language is cold, and its consolations without effect. But we, the priests of Jesus Christ, we have in the treasures of our faith a salutary balm for every wound, and consolation for every grief. According to the principles of our holy religion, the troubles inseparable from our sorrowful existence are consecrated, and in some sort rendered divine, when we humble ourselves under the hand of God Who sends them. Every pang of grief accepted with resignation is another jewel added to our crown; and when we shall reach Heaven, if we could feel a single regret, it would be not to have suffered more on earth, since we should have thereby achieved a higher degree of glory and happiness throughout eternity.

"Perhaps, we loved the world too much; how adversity detaches us from it! We reckoned on friends, who only sought us for their own amusement. How plainly we see their perfidy, now that they abandon us instead

of coming to console us in our troubles! We thought but little of our religious duties, carried away as we were in the tumult of our pleasures; how clearly we now perceive that the pleasures of virtue, and they alone, possess sweetness and reality!

“And then, if we have sinned, must we not expiate our offences either in this world by the sorrows which happen to us, or in the world to come, by frightful chastisements, in comparison of which the sharpest pains of this life are but as shadows? After all, what is this life? A vapor which quickly passes away. It appears long to one who is suffering; but when death comes, oh! how short does it appear, and how quickly has it ebbed away! Our troubles will then be at an end; but if we bear them patiently, they will bring us an eternal recompense.

“How happy are they, if they are in Heaven, who have suffered before us! How they bless the sufferings which, while they tortured, purified their hearts! It was you, they exclaim with enthusiasm, you, blessed sufferings, who caused us to see the vanity of the world; you who were the beginning of our conversion.

“Moreover, are we not Christians, that is to say, disciples of Jesus Christ? Would it be right that the slave should be joyful while the Master is in tears? He not only suffered, that Good Master, but He died to redeem our souls. He was innocence and holiness itself; and we who are weighed down with sins, and have contracted immense debts to divine justice, we would escape suffering! Oh! no; let us render to Jesus love for love; let us weep, let us suffer, let us die for Him, since He was pleased to weep, to suffer, and to die for us!”

It is unnecessary to say that it is not our intention that the address, of which we have given the formula, should be repeated verbatim; we feel that it would be out of place to give an exhortation of this length; it would wear the appearance of a sermon, and would be unbecoming on an occasion in which we must permit

the sufferer to speak as well as to listen. We have merely wished to suggest the principal reflections that it is good to offer to the afflicted, in order to alleviate the sorrow which oppresses them, and to enable them to bear it with resignation.

Besides, it will be seen that we have confined ourselves to general considerations, which are applicable to every species of suffering. It will be very necessary for the priest to descend from these generalities, and to give to his counsels a special character and propriety, which will of course vary according to the kind of grief, the intensity of sorrow, the social position, and the character of the person afflicted.

268. The main point, which we must never lose sight of, is to take every opportunity of inducing those whom we are endeavoring to console to return to God, if they are estranged from Him, or to attach themselves to Him more firmly than ever, if they already serve Him faithfully. In the designs of Divine Providence, the sorrows that befall us are meant for the sanctification of our souls; and since every priest is the executor of the Will of God, it is clear that he would fail in his duty if he limited himself to the utterance of a few more or less sentimental phrases which have no useful bearing upon the matter of eternal salvation.

It is, besides, an indisputable fact that nothing consoles persons in affliction, and helps them to bear the weight of their troubles, so much as the reception of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. It is in these sacraments, received with the fitting dispositions by those who are in that state of sorrow and anguish which moves the tender Heart of Jesus to compassion; yes, it is in these sacraments that the soul bathes itself again, and derives that vigor and courage which are so necessary to its life.

269. We have spoken hitherto only of the great calamities which overwhelm the soul, and call for consolations

proportioned to their degree of intensity. The pastor of a parish who endeavors faithfully to carry out our counsels will certainly have good reason to congratulate himself; but if he wishes that his flock should bless him still more, and still more and more exalt his zeal and charity, let him not confine himself to solacing only great afflictions. Many degrees below these great trials, there are, in the scale of sorrow, trials, less acute, no doubt, but not without their bitterness. Do we not every minute meet people in the parish who are sorrowful, anxious, suffering, infirm, embarrassed in circumstances, etc., etc.?

Why then should not a pastor go, as occasion requires, first to one, and then to another, carrying consolation with him, and distributing with a merciful charity encouragement and advice? What an excellent reputation would he not acquire in the midst of his flock, if he proved himself at every juncture kind, generous, sympathizing, and ever ready to console, and to render a service even at the expense of his purse! He may be certain that his praise would more than ever be in every mouth, and under these circumstances, the mouth would speak out of the fulness of the heart.

270. We will conclude this chapter with an observation which is not devoid of importance. Nothing is so deceitful as the heart, when we do not keep an attentive watchfulness over its movements. In it are found the germs of a thousand different sentiments; the good stands side by side with the bad, and an inclination at first innocent and even virtuous insensibly becomes defective and faulty. It has often been remarked that the heart of man is an abyss; and, we may add, the depths of it escape the most minute investigation: "*Et profundum abyssi quis dimensus est!*"

We therefore desire to say to our beloved brethren, that, in the application of the rules which we have just laid down, they must not travel too far on the path of consolation, if it is to young persons of a different sex

that they are ministering. Let us not forget that if the enemy of souls prowls about incessantly to find out their weak point, seeking whom he may devour, it is chiefly against the soul of the priest that he develops the resources of his infernal assiduity.

But perhaps it will be asked, "What is to be feared on the part of a person overwhelmed by the weight of a grief which excludes every other thought than that of its bitterness?" Deceitful illusion, which might unhappily make more than one victim! It is so natural to open our heart to one who shares our sorrow; it is so sweet to find a devoted comforter, when we are longing for consolation; so pleasant to meet a true friend in the path of sorrow, especially when others desert us; all this, we say, fills the heart with such tender emotions that the feeling, the noble feeling, of gratitude, might easily, if care were not taken, engender another feeling, less pure and less admissible. If on both sides the heart was naturally sensitive and easily moved, the mouth, alas! might give expression to the inmost feelings of the heart in words too expressive and too unrestrained.

O God! what a calamity, if, in the charitable desire to heal a grievous wound, another more deep and more serious should be inflicted.

We need careful self-watchfulness under these delicate circumstances! Let us never be alone with the persons of whom we are now speaking; let us give to our exhortations a well-defined character of modest gravity, and let us restrain those ever so little too expressive effusions, which are only relatively out of place, and which perhaps might be permissible in the case of older women, or with men. In this manner, all will be in order, and God, who is Order itself, and Sovereign Wisdom, will without doubt bless the discreet and charitable zeal of his faithful minister.

CHAPTER XIV.

INTERCOURSE WITH FELLOW-TRAVELLERS.

271. IN whatever place we may find ourselves, everywhere and always, we are priests; we ought, therefore, everywhere and always, to behave as priests, and as holy priests; opportunities of exercising zeal are never wanting; it is we, alas! who fail to seize the opportunities afforded us of working for the salvation of souls.

It is not only in the bosom of the parish confided to our care that we may sow the seeds of salvation, our journeys even often offer us happy opportunities. Whenever the holy priest meets with souls, his zeal kindles at their presence, and his principal occupation is to seek out means of working for the sanctification of those with whom Providence brings him in contact. When he is alone his zeal is not idle; he knows how to busy himself with souls; his tongue is silent, but the heart speaks, and the mind is at work. Prayer and study; these are the works of zeal of the priest in his closet.

Priests of Jesus Christ, saviours of souls, never infringe these great principles, and never imagine that on your journeys you may cast off restraint, and allow yourselves liberties, forgetting the august dignity of your profession.

272. But before speaking of the work of zeal which we may practise on our journeys, let us see when it is proper to undertake them. If there is any truth established by daily experience, it is that which the pious author of the Imitation has transformed into a spiritual axiom: *Qui peregrinantur, raro sanctificantur*. They who travel rarely keep themselves holy.

It cannot be denied that travelling is an occasion of

relaxation and dissipation, even for the most fervent. From the first moment we set foot in a public conveyance, it seems as if the soul contracts, and devotion ceases. Those unknown faces, that variety of age, sex, and condition, the fields, meadows, and woods through which we pass, and even the deafening rolling of the vehicle, all contribute to associate our soul with the external world, and destroy and dissipate the sweet joys found in the retirement of recollection and prayer. The pious silence of the study, the devotional exercises, the works of the ministry among a flock well known and tenderly cherished, contrast so greatly with the bustle, tumult, and excitement of travelling, that we ought to consider before setting out whether it is really desirable to undertake the journey.

273. Some journeys are necessary, or at least very useful; others are simply suitable, or indifferent; others are altogether out of place.

It is clear that the first are proper, and that God will bless them, as being necessary, or of very great usefulness. After having, in anticipation of any accident which may occur, made such arrangements as will preserve the flock from suffering during the absence of its pastor; after having fulfilled the requirements of the diocesan statutes relative to travelling, we may undertake the journey, if it is useful or necessary. Thus much is undeniable.

As for those which may be given up without inconvenience, and which are required neither by consideration of health, nor by the somewhat imperative exigencies of society, they may be allowed as recreation, provided that they are neither frequent nor lengthy; this last condition is especially necessary if we are exercising the functions of the holy ministry. We say: *they may be allowed*, and not, *they are well*, and it would pain us to see this species of *transeat* abused. We should feel much happier in saying, as regards these journeys, that

it is well not to take them, and that our spiritual interests and the interests of the parish demand that they should be given up.

We knew a holy and learned priest, who used to reflect long before undertaking any journey; it might have been thought that he had a great affair at stake; and as we one day expressed our surprise at so much hesitation, he replied, and we have never forgotten his words: "Nothing in the world should induce me to take a journey, if I were not thoroughly convinced that I should glorify God more by doing so than by not doing so." An excellent rule, which we should do well to apply to ourselves.

As to journeys of the third class, it is clear that we must absolutely forbid ourselves such indulgence. If we allow ourselves journeys which have nothing to justify them, how can we expect that God will bless them? If they are out of place, or undertaken for any wrong purpose, to what dangers are we not exposed? This thought alone will make every priest tremble, who acts inconsistently with the faith which he preaches.

274. Nothing gives greater cause for self-reproach to the priest engaged in the holy ministry, than frequent travelling. The parishioners lament, and complain bitterly of, his frequent absence. They well know that their continual recurrence cannot be required by any serious consideration. The pastor, the unattached priest even, whoever he may be, who allows himself so many journeys, passes in public opinion for an idle, lazy, dissipated man, a lover of good cheer, destitute of piety, zeal, and the true spirit of the ministry.

Mark well that we do not speak solely of those journeys of long duration, occupying several days, or perhaps even several weeks; no, we speak of those shorter absences, of those excursions made only to a little distance from the parish to clerical brethren, or elsewhere, which do not prevent the return home that same evening,

These short absences, when of frequent occurrence, are incompatible with pious and truly sacerdotal habits, without which the ministry of the priest is fruitless.

Ask one of these wandering priests to show you at the end of a week, a month, or a year, the work he has done during that time for the good of his flock. Some confessions hastily heard, some catechising without previous preparation, some sick people administered without zeal, piety, or unction; but for theological labor, the study of Holy Scripture, sermons and exhortations conscientiously worked out, visits to sinners in the hope of converting them, exercises of piety. . . . What blanks, great God! What gaps in a life which should have been so completely and so holily occupied!

275. That no one may be tempted to consider what we have said as exaggerated declamation, we think it right to insert the following passage from a treatise on Moral Theology, which has never, up to this time, incurred the reproach of excessive severity. "The residence," says his Eminence Cardinal Gousset, "to which the Curé is obliged, must be a personal residence; that is, he may not leave his post under the pretence that his place is supplied by another, except with the permission of his superior; and the superior will only allow it to those who show reasons more or less urgent in proportion to the extent of the proposed absence. It must be continuous. It is not enough to be in the parish on Sundays and days of obligation; he must be there every day, morally speaking; for every day there is something to be done for the parishioners; every day the ministry of the priest may be necessary to some believer. It is not enough to pass the night and a part of the morning at the parsonage; whoever without a legitimate reason absents himself every day, or nearly every day, or three or four times a week, going out in the morning not to return before night, cannot have a safe conscience; in addition to the danger of letting the sick die without the

Sacraments, he loses his time, places himself in such a position that he is not able to fulfil his duties with exactness, and scandalizes the people. Such a dissipated life is incompatible with the spirit of the priesthood, with the love of retreat, of prayer, and of study, necessary to every priest, and especially to those who are charged with the direction of souls."

276. Now we will suppose that all is as it should be. The reasons which demand our absence have been weighed before God, and are found sufficient; the preparations have been made, the necessary permission obtained. A brother priest has been approved to fill our place; we are starting. How are we to act that our journey may be blessed by God, and really be made a work of zeal?

Before starting, it were well, if discretion allows, to explain the reason of our absence. Having, as we have supposed, good reasons for the journey, every one will know them, and malignity will cease to attribute it to motives unworthy of a priest. It would be proper also to fix, with as much precision as possible, the exact day of returning; this will be a sort of obligation that may be usefully pleaded against the entreaties which relations and friends urge to detain us longer.

We advise the priest also, to take with him besides his Breviary, the New Testament, the Imitation of Jesus Christ, and a volume of ecclesiastical history or theology. These books should not be packed up, for they may be used in the carriage during the journey; it will be well to furnish themselves with sacred pictures, which, as opportunity permits, may be given with advantage to children or other travellers. These various recommendations will, perhaps, seem very minute; for ourselves, we believe them useful; holy priests scrupulously conform to them, and it is certain that travellers are edified by these pious practices, unimportant as they seem in themselves.

Finally, we must devote the journey to God, and

pray Him to bless it. If possible, it is good to pay a last visit to the Blessed Sacrament before starting. In this visit we recite the Itinerary, and place our heart within the Heart of Jesus; we promise Him to avoid such or such especial faults to which we are subject during travelling; we recommend to God our companions in travel, and ask the necessary grace to work to their sanctification; we put ourselves under the protection of Mary, of our good angel, of the patron, and the guardian angels of the parish, and finally withdraw, asking Jesus for his benediction.

277. The one fixed idea which ought to occupy our mind from the moment of departure is to edify our fellow-travellers by a modest exterior and profitable conversation. If we do not say to ourselves in a positive and determined manner, I will make the priesthood honored and respected in my person, by my exterior, and conversation; if we take our seat in the carriage mechanically, and without reflection, like ordinary travellers, it is to be feared that we shall not exercise a sufficiently strict vigilance over ourselves, and that from the very beginning we shall allow ourselves liberties which will hardly be edifying. But we will not anticipate.

Before getting into the carriage, we have sometimes explanations to ask; perhaps even some little debate occurs with the clerks of the office relative to our place or our luggage. We must, as a general rule, in our intercourse with these clerks, as with guards, drivers, porters, etc., be gentle, reasonable, generous, accommodating. Never have the least angry discussion with them; sacrifice, if necessary, a little money; we shall regain it, and more, in consideration and esteem.

Oh! what great annoyances we have seen arise on this account! How we have seen the priesthood humiliated, and humiliated under circumstances where nothing was easier than to maintain it in honor!

278. If, following the advice given above, we are firmly resolved to edify our travelling companions, we may sometimes do so from the very first moment; for example, in generously offering our place to any venerable old man, any invalid, or lady who seems uncomfortable in the place assigned to them. An act of attention in such circumstances will produce the best effect on the other travellers, and infallibly conciliate their esteem. Attention to others should be one of the prominent features of the priest's behavior in travelling. If he seems entirely occupied with himself, if he is blunt, positive, anxious about his own comfort, indifferent to the annoyances and embarrassments of others, he will be condemned directly, and with a malignity of which unhappily he will have no right to complain.

279. Is it right to remain silent during the journey? Is it better to talk? In this case what should be the subject of conversation? Let us reply to these questions.

If the journey is short, of a few miles only, and if we see that our companions are cold, taciturn, or sunk in reverie, and with the more reason, if they are men whom we know to be coarse, unsociable, enemies of religion and perhaps of the clergy, we shall do well to remain silent, and to plunge into our books. Nevertheless, if a happy opportunity presents itself, and if this opportunity enables us to render any little service to these persons, or of saying a courteous or amiable word to them, we must not fail to render this service, or to say this word; for who knows whether this will not be enough to bring about a profitable conversation?

If the travellers talk amongst themselves, and if, animated by wicked sentiments, their conversation turns upon improper matters, it will be most painful for the priest, particularly if he sees that they hold this conversation precisely because he is compelled to listen to them. The best course, in these circumstances, which

are happily rare, is either to read, or to shut the eyes so that they may believe that we are asleep.

We travelled one day with some young men, who, from levity rather than from hatred to the clergy, had commenced a very free conversation. A learned and zealous priest found means to slip in a few words which pleased them greatly; this was an excellent starting-point. From this moment he carried on the conversation unceasingly, in an instructive and agreeable manner; he made excursions into the field of natural science with a facility of eloquence quite marvellous. They listened to him with a lively interest, and even proposed difficulties merely to have the pleasure of hearing them solved. Only, when he left off speaking, our young men resumed their conversation. As long as they spoke of things indifferent, the good priest let them chatter; but immediately he saw that the conversation took a bad turn, with a tact and address truly remarkable, he resumed his scientific dissertations; and if he did not effect a positive good, he certainly prevented a very real evil. "Do you see," said he to me, as we were walking up a hill, "how I labor to prevent these poor young men from offending God!" I cite this, because it is an example which might be so easily followed by many priests in similar circumstances.

280. But let us speak of ordinary cases. Nearly always a priest may converse, and it is generally desirable to do so. A priest who, in travelling with respectable people, is the only one who keeps a prolonged silence, passes for a man of a sombre and morose disposition; perhaps, even, if the travellers are not above the middle class, they might suppose that he rather disdained to speak to them. Now, these several judgments being all unfavorable, he should not put himself in a position to deserve them. He should speak, then, but he should speak in a useful manner, and remember that the journey of a holy priest should be an exercise of zeal.

He certainly should not set himself up stiffly as a moralist, or preacher. No; he should speak at first of indifferent things; the rain or the fine weather may ordinarily commence the conversation; but after the usual preliminary commonplaces to which travellers so often have recourse, he should attract their attention by his pious exterior, by the modest reserve of his eyes, by the gentleness of his voice, and the suavity of his manners. Already the travellers will have formed a favorable opinion of him, and will be disposed to profit by the edifying words which he will by and by find an opportunity of speaking. After this, nothing will be easier, if we so please, than to open a useful and even pious conversation. The smallest circumstance, the, apparently, most insignificant word dropped by one of the travellers, may form the foundation of a discourse which shall glorify God, and sanctify the souls of those present. True zeal is the great essential; let us have this true zeal, and opportunities for exercising it will never be wanting. We might, for example, according to circumstances, propose pious reflections, give good advice, relate edifying tales, clear up difficulties raised by any traveller on points of religion, enlarge on some point of doctrine, if we think we can do so to advantage, give a favorable idea of religion, show that it is rejected only because it is not comprehended, that there is no happiness except in practical religion, and a thousand other details that cannot be mentioned here, all more or less edifying.

Lest we should fatigue and weary our hearers, it will be convenient from time to time to give another direction to the conversation, and to speak of instructive or even indifferent matters. But even in speaking of these things, it will be good to let a large fund of piety appear through all, so that they may in some way recognize the priest, even if they had not known a priest was speaking.

All this will greatly edify, will lead perhaps to more than one conversion, and will destroy many prejudices against religion and the clergy, as once happened to that man of the world, who, after a long conversation in a carriage with an ecclesiastic on religion and other matters, said to him with simplicity, "Ah, Monsieur l'abbé, what a pity those miserable Jesuits are not all such priests as you are;" not knowing at the time that it was to a Jesuit that he was addressing his eulogy.

281. It is not sufficient to describe the course which ought to be pursued with travelling companions; what ought to be shunned must also be pointed out; for it is clear that, on this point as on every other, the *Declina a malo* should be joined to the *fac bonum*.

We sometimes meet on our journeys with priests who are great talkers. They arrogate to themselves a monopoly of the conversation; they have an inexhaustible flow of language, and if they permit their auditors to say a few words, their object seems, not so much to listen to them with attention, as just to take breath, and to continue their march with renewed ardor. Nothing is so fatiguing as such loquacity. On the part of a layman it may be tolerated, but on the part of a priest it is so misplaced as always to produce a doubly painful impression.

There are some priests who are always laughing, joking, and trifling. These, too, are commonly great talkers, but they give to their discourse a jovial character, even approaching buffoonery, which provokes a coarse laugh, and sometimes a smile of pity. Whatever may be the subject of the conversation, they always have the secret of enlivening it by their puns and humor. People see that their mind is occupied merely with the search after witty sayings, as their tongue moves only to utter them. Not a word, we will not say pious, but even grave and serious. Would to God that this wit of theirs never injured the holy virtue which ought to be the most brilliant ornament of the priest!

Some priests are backbiters, and direct their malignant language against their neighbors. In the presence of laymen, incredible as it seems, and laymen on whose discretion they cannot reckon, since most commonly they do not know them, they dare relate facts which damage the reputation of others; they rail against their brethren, complain of their parishioners, perhaps even censure their superiors, and blame the acts of their administration. Oh! what scandal do they cause by such conduct, and what a miserable idea do they give of the priesthood!

There are priests, again, who, when travelling, are neither great talkers, nor too gay, nor backbiters; and yet there is nothing pious or edifying in their conversation; not a word of God, or of religion. In vain opportunities present themselves, they forget to take advantage of them, and the journey ends without their having said a single word of edification. One day a man of the world, who had no religion, having travelled a long time in company with a priest, said to the other travellers when the priest had got out, "If I were going to confess, it would not be to that priest that I should address myself." "Why?" "Why? Because during the many hours we have travelled and chatted together, he has not spoken a single word of God."

Finally, there are Priests who not only do not speak of God, but who do not even commune with Him secretly in exercises of piety, a thing which may nearly always be done during the journey, when there is the will. Their Breviary said, all is finished for the day; no spiritual reading, no chaplet, no meditation. Nevertheless, what can be more edifying than to see a holy priest pass from a pious conversation to a spiritual exercise? Those who have no religion admire a priest who conducts himself in such a way, and trust, perhaps, from the bottom of their heart, that they may find a priest of this character when they shall return to God.

282. Let us say a few words on the priest's behavior at an inn. Here we agree that almost always he will be constrained to exercise his zeal in a negative manner, that is to say, he will have but little opportunity of performing acts of zeal, properly so called; but he will always be able to edify by his general conduct.

Let us remember that modesty by itself, without the aid of a single word, is an excellent way of preaching. We all know this trait in the character of Saint Francis of Assisi. He called one of his brethren, and said to him, "My brother, let us go and preach." "Willingly, my father." They set out; the holy saint points the road, and, with eyes modestly cast on the ground, their exterior seriously composed, they traverse several streets of the city, and return to the monastery. "But," said the brother to the good saint, "Father, we went out to preach, and here we are at home, without having opened our lips." "Be content, brother, the work is done; the serious and collected modesty we have exhibited in our walk is an excellent sermon, and will bear its fruit." Let us, therefore, preach in this manner in those inns which a troublesome necessity obliges us to enter, and, like St. Francis, rely upon it, our preaching will not be in vain.

Men of the world, who are in the habit of travelling, have in inns a certain free and easy air, which everywhere else would be considered coarse and insolent, but which in these public places is very common. Look, for example, at a commercial traveller; one would say he was the master and ruler of the place. He speaks to the servants as if they were slaves; his words are high, authoritative, short, and sharply spoken. Is he at table? He seems to be the king of the feast; he takes the place which pleases him best; he seats himself in an offhand manner; he gives the tone to the conversation; he calls the waiter for the most trifling thing; he jokes, he relates anecdotes, he laughs loudly, he finds fault with all the dishes one after the other, and, if the ingredients his taste

requires are wanting, he seasons them with piquant remarks. If he helps himself to anything, it is only to taste it, and for the pleasure of sending away the remainder. If he were at home he would be far less particular; but at a hotel it is quite another thing; there he has the reputation of knowing what good living is, which he must maintain at all costs. Besides, if he finds himself in the company of some traveller who is but a novice, and who shows the silly simplicity of being civil to a servant, and especially of thanking him when he hands him anything, this is, perhaps, the most entertaining scene for our great man.

What ought the priest to do in the presence of this man, who seems to consider himself as the type of the traveller who knows the world? Shall he imitate his tone, his manners, his language, so little in conformity with his own ordinary habits! Shall he suppose that he ought to act in the same manner, and that he is at liberty to be equally free, brusque, and almost insolent?

Probably there are some priests who, to a certain extent, assume this permission. They believe that it is a custom generally adopted, and that they would appear ridiculous if they acted otherwise; that the servants and people of the hotel are accustomed to conduct of this kind; and that, in short, they will scandalize nobody, although they are priests, in following the stream. But we say that they would do very wrong to act thus. Never, not even at inns, ought politeness to be laid aside by an ecclesiastic. Of course, it is not necessary that a priest should run into the opposite extreme; he is in a house open to all the world, and not in the house of an individual who has done him the honor to invite him there. But, however public the place may be, politeness is never out of season, and if it be neglected by a priest, the fault would be remarked.

Let him be everywhere courteous, gentle, and amiable; let him boldly, and without any concealment, pronounce

the *Benedicite* and the thanksgiving; let him talk but little, and occupy himself only with his neighbors, if the guests are many; let him place himself near the travellers with whom he has made acquaintance in the carriage; let him not find fault with the dishes, although all the rest should do so; let him ask, but not in a loud voice, for whatever he wants, and although he may not be obliged to thank, he need not blush if a "thank you" should escape him. Lastly, we shall not tell him to be awkward; but still less shall we tell him to be free and familiar in his behavior.

If, under these circumstances, a priest is reserved, modest, simple, and even a little awkward, travellers will have a good opinion of him; a smile may, perhaps, be seen on their lips, but there will be approbation at the bottom of their hearts. They will think that he is a good priest; that he is not used to travelling; and that if he has quitted his flock, no doubt a good reason has determined him to do so.

Will they pass an equally favorable judgment upon the priest who is light, jesting, and vain, who will also take liberties, and who, considering the vivacity of the commercial traveller as good taste, seems to do his best to follow in his steps? We do not reply to these questions; manifestly, to put them is to resolve them.

In terminating this long article we shall recommend the priest to be liberal towards servants; he ought always to give proofs of his disinterestedness, and to lessen at every interview the opinion too generally entertained that the love of money is one of the vices of the clergy.

283. We approach the end of our journey; how ought we to behave at the house of those who kindly entertain us, and with whom we may perhaps pass several days?

The first thing is to call to mind our one fixed determination; to remember that we are priests, that we are about to come in contact with persons with whom we

are not in frequent intercourse, to whom, perhaps, we are even unknown, and that following the resolutions made before our departure, we ought to seize every opportunity of edifying these persons by our deportment as well as by our conversation.

If it is for any particular business that we have undertaken our journey, and if we have no legitimate reason for prolonging our stay after this business is settled, we should set out for home without delay; for we ought always to abridge the duration of our absence as much as possible.

But if we are to spend some considerable time with friends or relatives, let us endeavor to find out how we can be useful to them, and whom we can serve in regard to zeal for their welfare. This may often be done quite naturally, and without the slightest embarrassment. Thus, for instance, if, as commonly happens, we are visiting friends, and there are in the house any young people or children that we are already acquainted with, what is more easy for a good priest, who has made himself known as pious and zealous, than to say to one of these young persons when they are alone, "Well, my dear, are you always a good child? Are you a great comfort to your excellent parents? You never go in bad company, do you, my child? Do you from time to time attend the sacraments? Ah! how happy you will be on the day of your first communion! Now, my dear child, tell me how do you stand before God? You know my affection for you, that I take the most lively interest in you. Profit by my stay with your parents to make a step forward. Come and pay me a little visit every day; you will give me great pleasure; we will talk together of God's service, and of the happiness enjoyed by those who embrace it with fervor. Do not be afraid of annoying me or fatiguing me. Oh! no, my child, I shall always be happy if I can do anything for the good of your soul, which is very dear to me."

With some variations, according to circumstances and the rank of the person, we might address the same language to the servants of the house, sometimes to the masters themselves, or to the friends we may have the opportunity of meeting during our stay. If these good counsels are well received, we may quietly resume the topic, and endeavor to remove at the second time whatever had resisted our first attempt.

It is easy to see how much good may result from the employment of these pious methods, above all, if the language of faith is fortified by the good example we shall strive to give, by a mild and amiable, yet always reserved and modest cheerfulness, and by that combination of virtues which wins hearts to God, and reconciles the very unbeliever to religion and her ministers.

284. We ought to mention here an abuse unhappily too common. A journey is often regarded as a long and perpetual recreation; so that the Mass once said, and the Breviary recited, the rest of the day is spent in visits and walks, at the table or at cards. Sometimes even, the Breviary is not said at all until the end of the day, or rather of the evening, precisely at the time when we are as unfitted as possible to fulfil this rigorous obligation properly. The chain of spiritual exercises is totally broken. Spiritual reading, chaplet, particular examen, the visits to the Blessed Sacrament, all are put aside, and replaced by conversations of interminable length, during which the soul is filled with a thousand vanities which entirely absorb it.

Nevertheless, nothing is easier than to retire from time to time, during the day, to perform now one exercise, now another. The persons at whose house we are staying would think these short absences perfectly natural; they would suppose we had some religious duties to fulfil, and would be edified to see we had not forgotten them.

Is it not evident, besides, that being much exposed to

dissipation and relaxation, we have special need to refresh ourselves now and then, during the day, with our spiritual exercises? Is it not also in these exercises that we shall draw that mild and persuasive unction, which will insure the success of the efforts of our zeal?

We have recommended that a book be taken for perusal; our advice is, perhaps, followed; the book is taken; but what use is made of it? Is it opened even once a day? Alas! we may fear that it has not been opened, perhaps, once during the whole journey! Look at it, and when you return home you will often see that the marker has not been moved.

285. When the time that we allowed ourselves has expired, we must make our preparations for departure, and firmly resist any attempts which may be made to detain us longer. We must collect together in a body all the reasons which demand our return, and, if necessary, we must pronounce our determination with a decision which will crush all hope of inducing us to prolong our visit.

To conclude; we must observe with our new travelling companions the same rules of conduct that have been already laid down; and, returned home, we must resume our duties and pious exercises with redoubled zeal and ardor.

CHAPTER XV.

INTERCOURSE BY LETTER.

286. THE interchange of letters, called correspondence, is a written conversation. As the interlocutors are too far distant to hear each other, the post comes to their assistance, and serves as a channel of communication.

The rules applicable to conversation are the same, in a certain degree, as those for epistolary correspondence.

A conversation too long, and too frequently repeated, is generally blamable; a correspondence too active and too abundant, is no less so. Conversation is sometimes necessary; so is correspondence; conversation is sometimes useful, and utility sometimes requires correspondence; conversation is often idle, and we shall have to render an account of it to our Sovereign Judge; correspondence is sometimes an equally useless pastime, a pastime in which a priest should not indulge; lastly, conversation may be dangerous, and very often correspondence is the same.

There is a considerable difference between the two; it is explained by the old saying, which is but the expression of a fact: *Verba volant, scripta manent*. If our letters are holy, pious, and edifying, they do not fly away like our words; they remain, *manent*, as a monument of the zeal which inspired them; witness the letters of St. Jerome, St. Bernard, St. Francis de Sales, and many other saints. If our letters are useless, or even dangerous, they remain also, but as monuments of foolishness, frivolity, and imprudence.

Let us, therefore, weigh well before God the reasons that induce us to open a correspondence, or to write even a single letter; never writing without a full conviction that it is better to write than to remain silent.

287. Believing it to be our duty to write, we should consider, first, how we may manage to slip into our letters something useful and edifying. On this point, as on every other, we must always remember the duty of zeal. Unless we write simply on temporal business to a man of the world whom we know but slightly, it is very seldom that an opportunity cannot be found of adding a few words of edification. At least, we know that holy priests never feel any embarrassment on this point, and that their pen, obedient to a heart full of love

to God, and of zeal for souls, always knows how to trace lines breathing with piety, and often fruitful in happy results.

Holy priests not only say good things in their letters, but they have the secret of saying them with a sweet and penetrating unction, which passes from their heart into the heart of their correspondents. Ah! if we were saints, what flames of zeal would burst from the depths of our hearts to kindle the souls of others with that celestial ardor with which we ourselves are consumed.

288. Some letters are *necessary*; family business has to be arranged; our advice is asked on a matter of importance; a letter of condolence must be written to a relation or to an intimate friend who is under great affliction; of course, in these and other similar circumstances a letter is indispensable; it comes within the limit of our duties, and God demands that we should write, and that without delay. We add this last recommendation, and it is to negligent priests that we address it.

The manner in which a priest keeps up his correspondence nearly always shows his true character for regularity, order, and exactness. A diligent, careful, and regular priest makes a rule of answering his letters *as soon as possible*; and as he hastens at once to reply to the letters as they reach him, he avoids that incumbrance which negligence occasions, and which finishes by producing discouragement, then omissions, or lamentable forgetfulness.

289. Letters are only *useful* when an advantageous result may be anticipated, but when, nevertheless, we might dispense with writing them without failing in any positive duty. Such are, for example, letters to relations or friends, in which we may offer good advice, give encouragement in the practice of virtue, sustain and fortify a weak and wavering piety, point out with amiable zeal certain faults of which the writer has knowledge, and show the serious consequences to which they may lead.

In these letters we may attempt the conversion of some unbeliever, and say boldly in our correspondence what from timidity we should not venture to say by word of mouth.

Sometimes also, it is useful not to break off entirely our epistolary communication with a person who does not actually profit by it, but over whom by this means we preserve an influence which may be of great advantage to him afterwards. When the Divine mercy knocks at the door of great sinners, it is well for them to be able to count amongst their friends some devoted priest to whom they may impart their desire for conversion, which will procure for this good priest the opportunity of exhorting them as soon as possible to complete their return to God.

In these various circumstances, and generally when we know that our advice will be followed, we need not fear to multiply it; but we must not give it with that air of authority which wounds self-love, and nips in the bud the good sentiments which are springing forth. It is always in the tone of mild and winning piety that advice must be offered; it is the language of a friend or of a father that we must pour into their ears, not the lessons of a pedagogue.

290. To speak now of *useless* letters; understand that we include in this category all the frivolous and jesting letters, the sole object of which is an idle amusement. These letters are not uncommon; those who write with facility and talent like to employ their pen on useless topics. Such letters gratify the inclination for amusement, with the sole result of a loss of time for writer and reader alike.

Besides, it often happens that, in this sort of correspondence, charity is wounded, jests are in abundance, and if the letter is addressed to a brother priest, even superiors are not always spared. Besides, even if charity should not be wronged, it is enough that this correspond-

ence is useless to ensure its condemnation on the part of a holy priest. The life of a priest can and ought to be so useful to souls that he should severely reproach himself for sacrificing even the smallest portion to trivialities and follies.

But may not these useless letters be allowed as recreation, and as the means of maintaining ancient friendships?

A priest who is careful to avoid all that may wound charity or any other virtue; who duly fulfils all his duties, and who may, without neglecting anything, allow himself a few moments' recreation; or who but seldom indulges himself thus, and writes such letters only at long intervals, to him we think that this little amusement is quite permissible. But we would invite attention to this corrective, that jesting shall never form the exclusive topic of our letters; after it has had its share, and a good share, if you will, we must go on to more serious matters, and, in some sort, make amends for this trifling by pious reflections or wise counsels, according to the circumstances and character of the person to whom we write.

291. Must we class amongst useless letters those which are written to keep up a correspondence with pious persons, discharging towards them the functions of a director, and expressing what distance prevents our saying *vivâ voce*? What shall we say of these letters of direction?

We shall say at first that such a correspondence *may* be useful, and is really so *sometimes*; but we shall immediately add, that *very often* it is useless, and sometimes worse than useless. This general answer leads us necessarily to details into which we shall enter readily, from the conviction of their importance.

That such letters of direction and wise counsel may possibly be useful is incontestable. Who does not need advice, and, above all, the advice of a learned, pious, and zealous priest? Who is better qualified to give this ad-

vice than the priest who knows the very secrets of our conscience and the needs of our soul? All this is true, and we think that this direction may be very useful.

But to whom, speaking generally, will it be useful? To the young man, for example, who was the consolation of his pastor while under his eye, and who has gone away for a long time, perhaps forever, with no possibility of communication except by letter. Most certainly correspondence with this excellent young man will be very useful to him. Left to himself, exposed without defence to the seduction of the many bad examples which surround him, he greatly needs to hear the voice of his pastor speaking perpetually in the depths of his soul to restore his courage, and rekindle his fervor.

This written direction may also be useful to a man more advanced in age, whose conversion was subject of public remark, and who may have made his general confession to a priest living at a distance. This priest possesses all his confidence; for he has opened his heart to him as to God; and needs again to recur to his wise counsels, either to calm his agitated conscience, which has passed quickly from a state of complete insensibility to an excessive susceptibility; or to confirm himself more and more in his better sentiments; or to clear up a difficulty which has presented itself. It is evident that, in these and similar circumstances, this man's position requires that we write to him to second his good intentions, to soothe the anxiety of his conscience, and smooth for him the ways that conduct not only to virtue, but even to the perfection of virtue, if he is well-directed.

Not to multiply examples, we shall say that, generally, as respects men, direction by way of correspondence is very useful, and we regret that it is not more frequently adopted. In affairs of conscience and rules of piety, men ordinarily go straight to the point, and do not catch up a crowd of minute difficulties, as women seem to delight in doing. The decision once given, men accept

it or reject it at once, without taking, as the women do, a half-and-half course, amusing themselves with criticising, arguing, commenting, making all sorts of suppositions and little difficulties, which are simply provoking, and waste valuable time.

It is for the men, then, that letters of direction are useful; but, unfortunately, it is very seldom that they are addressed to men. For one man who asks this spiritual service from us, there are twenty women who drive us to extremities by the importunity of their demands.

292. Now, shall a priest absolutely refuse to women the benefit of direction by letter? Indeed, experience has so often proved the uselessness of such a thing, that we should at first feel tempted to forbid it; but as there is no rule without an exception, our opinion is, that, as a general principle, we must not maintain such a correspondence with women, and that, if we are to contravene our principle, it must be under these conditions: 1st, that these women are no longer young; 2d, that they are not under the power of a husband, unless he should be perfectly cognizant of our correspondence, and give his approval; 3d, that they are prudent and discreet; 4th, that they are possessed of common-sense and sound judgment; 5th, that they are not, by temper and character, punctilious, captious, and of endless verbosity; 6th, that they sincerely desire to correct their faults, acquire virtues, and go on unto perfection without flagging.

To find these conditions united is very rare; but when they are found, we may assist the good soul who asks from us the help of a written direction.

We will only add, that these persons must learn to write *clearly, methodically, and concisely*; and, joining example to precept, we ourselves must give this triple stamp to every portion of our correspondence. If, at the beginning, these persons address to us a letter, a very newspaper in its length, our reply must be the very

smallest note, in which, going straight to the point, we say just what ought to be said, and not another syllable.

We will add again, that, even under the favorable circumstances enumerated above, the correspondence must not be too active. Making exceptions for grave and unforeseen difficulties, one letter in the month is sufficient.

293. The ground thus cleared, we shall say boldly, that in the absence of the circumstances mentioned above, we must absolutely forbid those letters of direction for which many women are so eager, although they derive scarcely any benefit from them.

Does not this interminable correspondence, in which the same things are repeated again and again, occasion a sad loss of time on both sides, while no further progress is made after the torrents of letters than had existed before the first? What do we generally find in the heap of rubbish periodically and punctually despatched to the director? Interminable jeremiads about distractions in prayer and coldness in God's service, for which they can discover no reason, though the confessor has told them a hundred times in his answers that these distractions and coldnesses proceed only from habitual dissipation, and from default of vigilance and mortification.

What else do we find in this voluminous correspondence? Great lamentations over inward troubles depicted in the darkest colors, and often with exaggerations which the writer hides from herself, but which are quickly detected by the searching eye of the director.

What is there at last in these letters? Sometimes all the follies of a scrupulous conscience, which seeks peace where there is no peace, and will not seek it in that blind obedience where it is sure to be found.

After months and years of written direction, let us examine ourselves before God, and ask these two questions: first, whether the floods of letters between the

director and the person directed have produced in the soul of the latter any appreciable amelioration? next, whether, in good faith, the time passed in reading so many letters, and writing so many replies, might not have been employed a hundred times better in making good sermons, in the better preparation of catechisms, and in the search after sinners to convert them? We subscribe our approbation beforehand to the reply which will be made to these questions by a straightforward and enlightened conscience.

Without doubt, the persons now under consideration are not, on the whole, in a bad way; on the contrary, there is good in them, and, sometimes, very much good; they are full of good-will, although much want of faith, and many venial faults are allied to their devotion; they are, nevertheless, in a state which does not compromise the great business of their salvation. But, whether it be narrowness of mind, incurable blindness, habitual resistance to grace, or some other cause, they will have direction, but refuse the fruits of direction; they will have a director, and will not obey that director; they will be directed, and so avoid the appearance of directing themselves. It is a delusion which Père Guiloré exposed, saying simply, "Listen, my good daughter, do you know, in two words, what you want! You wish *to direct yourself through a director.*" The director you are resolved to have, that you may persuade yourself that he directs you; but personal self-direction, the direction of yourself by yourself, you are even more resolved to have than the director.

Often, too, these persons wish to make themselves interesting; their self-esteem is flattered to think that a priest, whom, moreover, they generally select from his high position, thinks of them before God, is busily occupied with the sanctification of their soul, and does for them what he does not do for a multitude of others. All this feeds their vanity, does no real good, wastes precious

time, and has no claim to a place among the works of a holy priest.

294. To come at last to *dangerous* letters. It may be said, can a priest write letters which deserve this title? We do not wish to believe it; nevertheless, in order to prevent this misfortune, we will show what sort of letters we term dangerous. They are those, for example, which we might be tempted to write to persons of the opposite sex who are young, or not so advanced in age as to be considered elderly.

It occasionally happens that these young persons, often with an excellent intention, write to the priest who has been their confessor, to consult him on some difficulties of conscience, and to ask some pious advice and rules for conduct. If the parents know it, and give their approbation, it may be done once or twice, and the priest in this case may reply to the letters addressed to him; but to keep up a long correspondence with these young persons, whether as director or otherwise, would be great imprudence; and we think that the priest would expose himself to more than one danger in writing such letters.

It would be very much worse, if the priest should act thus in the case of a young wife whose husband might detect a correspondence of this nature previously concealed from his knowledge. The serious consequences of such a discovery may be easily imagined.

To these young women and to these young wives, we must reply without hesitation, that we are compelled to refuse them what they ask; we must refer them to their regular confessors, and promise them, at most, that we will hear them at the holy tribunal when we have the opportunity of meeting them. But no written direction, no long correspondence, however plausible may be their reasons.

Oh! what levity and imprudence there is amongst these young women! What pleasure they have sometimes in hawking about the letters they receive, when

these letters express a great interest in them! And if they are written by a priest, what increased excitement there is to communicate them to their friends, who often make them the subject of satirical criticisms, and pervert their motive, their sense, and their purport!

Besides, is there not reason to fear lest in this ground, well prepared, we readily believe, and in which, until now, there has been deposited only the purest seed of salvation, that enemy of ours which we call human nature should surreptitiously come to diffuse its intoxication? Human weakness is very great; woman's head is not firm, her heart still less so; the priest, on his side, surrounded though he be by light and grace, did not cease to be a man the day he became a priest. He knows better than any the frailty of the human heart, he who passes his life in healing its wounds and probing its miseries; better than any, therefore, should he know that a spark has often produced terrible conflagrations; that a word, a single word, the least degree too hasty, too expressive, we would not say too tender, too affectionate, but since it is written we shall not efface it; the priest, we say, should know better than any, that such a word may elicit another still stronger, and that by degrees they might, which God forbid, stop only at the bottom of an abyss.

What might happen, if this priest was naturally prone to tender attachments? What might happen, above all, if he had already undergone painful struggles in this respect? What might happen, once more, if the young person herself bore in her heart a burden of misery and weakness! O God! O God! what perils are here! And how fully do they justify the severity of our decisions!

295. Here is also another serious danger upon which we think it right to say a few words. Before doing so we are happy to declare that, so far as we know, the serious imprudence of which we speak has never been committed. Why, then, it will be said, do you mention

it? We do it only to put our readers on their guard against what might produce, by degrees, the scandal which must follow upon this imprudence, to the great confusion of the priesthood.

The rock which we have in view, consists in a correspondence maintained with a lady entirely independent, rich, already advanced in years, and of a generous disposition. She has, probably (for let us not forget that all that follows is purely hypothetical), been connected by strictly legitimate ties of direction or friendship with some ecclesiastic. From some cause he has been compelled to leave the neighborhood of this lady, but an epistolary correspondence replaces the visits and conversations. These letters have nothing apparently improper or objectionable; perhaps, from time to time, they even contain some good advice; nevertheless, they are rather letters of friendship than of direction or religion. They maintain a reciprocal friendship, which shows itself in presents, more or less considerable during her lifetime, and in testamentary legacies after death. Perhaps the relations of this person have already made their murmurs heard; they have already complained of an attachment, the consequences of which they seem to foresee; but it is quite another thing from complaints and murmurs, when, on opening the will, they discover the name of the priestly friend who had already excited their suspicion.

What do they think? What do they say, especially when they come to put their hand on a voluminous correspondence, which but too well explains the clause of the will? These letters, in which he testifies so sincere an attachment, so entire a devotion, so strong a desire to render every kind of service, if only opportunity offers; these letters, in which the most indulgent charity cannot help seeing hidden meanings, and which leave much to be imagined beyond what is written; these letters, which, in truth, ask without asking, are they in their place? Are

they creditable to religion and its ministers? Do they give a high idea of the piety, disinterestedness, and zeal of the writer? And can any one say that, in styling them *dangerous*, we are pronouncing an unmerited censure?

O Priest of Jesus Christ, we would say to this our brother: Lift thine head towards heaven, and do not carry it like a miser, bent down earthwards. Take again thy crown, which has fallen in the dust; restore to thy soul its glory, which is for a moment eclipsed; do not throw into the sea, like the pagan philosopher, the sack of gold which has come to thee, but leave it untouched for the greedy heirs who dispute it with thee; and prove to them, by this conspicuous act of disinterestedness, that thy pen was the instrument of a pure friendship, and not of the sordid self-interest of which thou art accused.

296. Perhaps it is not altogether useless to state here what ought to be the general tone of our correspondence. It is most certainly the language of piety which we are bound to employ; but this has many shades, and should not affect uniformity with respect to all our correspondents.

In writing to men, boldness, straightforwardness, force, elevated sentiments, large and profound views, things and not phrases; to young men, the same rules; nevertheless, a few lines well-expressed and really felt, containing a little food for the imagination, a little warmth for the heart, and, as the fertilizing element, the charm of a sweet and winning piety, this is what we need.

With women, it is a different thing; piety, and piety in its purity, without a grain of admixture, should so reign in our letters as to extinguish all other sentiments, without leaving even the suspicion that we have aught else in view than the confirmation of that piety in their souls. Strict reserve, brevity, precision, no idle nonsense, no exaggerated demonstrations of devotedness and interest, no flatteries, none of those flights of zeal, nor those in-

flamed expressions which, while they seem to proceed from a heart set on fire by Divine love, do not always produce the intended effect.

In our letters to women, especially if they are young, let us be grave, firmly pious, and scrupulously prudent? Let us never write to them before asking God's assistance in a fervent prayer; and when our letter is finished let us read it slowly and phrase by phrase, and ask ourselves if we would consent to its being read publicly, or simply by a superior, by our Bishop, or even by this or that holy priest of our acquaintance, whom we know to be so pious, so grave, and so reserved when he writes such letters. Our reply to this question is not long in coming, and this reply will give the rule for our conduct.

297. We have spoken much in this chapter of the advantages which we may, by our letters, procure to our neighbor; let us next say a word of the spiritual profit that we ourselves may draw from the letters of others.

We, too, have need sometimes to be sustained, enlightened, consoled, and encouraged. If zeal has its ardors, it has often its faintnesses too; if our heart feels energy on certain happy days, alas! it feels but too acutely at other times its weakness and oppression; if joy in the service of God sustains us, if success in our labors overflows our soul with its celestial consolations; the disappointments, the thorns of the ministry, the ingratitude with which our charity is sometimes repaid, and many other troubles which come upon us daily, disturb but too often the serenity of the soul and the joys of the heart.

In these days of dejection and weariness, we long for some charitable and devoted friend who may refresh our courage, reanimate our zeal, and restore to our soul that holy ardor which threatens to become extinguished. Oh! how good it is then to have recourse to some holy priest, whose words, like so many flaming darts, deliciously wound the heart they penetrate!

Holy priests, as we all know, have a language which

is not of earth; their every word is pregnant with zeal and holiness; their retired life, their pious habits, their ardent charity, their entire detachment from all that is earthly and perishable; all this, united in their pure souls, imparts to their counsels and to their lightest words an irresistible charm. In our intercourse with them, we seem to undergo a sort of transformation; then, as soon as we leave them, we feel in our heart a joy so sweet, a consolation so pure, that we resume, not only without reluctance, but even with pleasure, all the works of zeal which had been for a moment suspended.

Can any one prevent us then in these painful trials from having recourse to one of these holy priests who ask nothing better than to help us in winning souls? If we cannot enjoy their pious conversations on account of the distance which separates us, can we not write to them? Let us write, therefore, and say, in a thoroughly frank and simple letter, what we are, or rather what we are no longer; let us explain in detail our temptations of mental dejection, weariness, disgust, and faintheartedness, etc. Let us explain how they have invaded our soul, and to what we attribute their deadly progress; let us ask counsel and encouragement of our fervent Ananias; and most certainly we shall receive one of those letters, written after the manner of the Saints, which will help us to surmount all the temptations, and to overthrow all the obstacles, in our path.

CHAPTER XVI.

INTERCOURSE WITH THE FAITHFUL IN GENERAL, WITH A VIEW TO THEIR EMPLOYMENT IN WORKS OF CHARITY.

298. HOWEVER extended is the good which may be accomplished by a holy and truly zealous priest, it is

nevertheless certain that it will be far less considerable if he acts alone, than if he associates a mass of believers to labor together in the practice of good works. Unfortunately these means are too rarely employed, although producing such wonderful results in a multitude of parishes.

A timid Curé, although pious, and even zealous, at least in principle, will not dare to address himself to this or that parishioner to suggest an important work and claim his co-operation; he will fear the unpleasantness of a refusal; he will persuade himself that his plan will be disapproved of, and that he will be regarded as annoying and importunate.

Another will be destitute of that mighty confidence which zeal inspires when it is ardent, and animated by a lively piety. Naturally suspicious, he will despair of success when any work of zeal is on hand; his idea of the dispositions of his parishioners will be hardly charitable, and even false; and perhaps, without ever having made any serious appeal to their zeal and generosity, he will persuade himself that he dare not count on them for the realization of any important work. It is not boldness that is wanting to this pastor, it is confidence; and this want of confidence renders many works of zeal abortive, which were destined, perhaps, in the designs of God, to produce the most admirable effects. We say abortive, and this is the exact expression. In fact, these works exist in their germ, if we may thus speak, in the soul of the pastor; and, to develop this germ, a little confidence only is needed. Not having this confidence, and, indeed, being quite of the contrary character, his contemplated works of charity are smitten with a lamentable barrenness.

Let us be daring, dear brethren, really daring in our holy works, and never be fettered by a foolish apprehension of failure. This failure, after all, exists only in appearance; in reality, it is a victory; because all our

efforts to obtain success, all the trouble, fatigue, and weariness which our endeavors have cost us, all this, believe it well, is faithfully reckoned by Him who shall one day judge us, and who will not regulate His rewards according to our success, but according to the efforts and the labors of the workmen employed in His vineyard.

299. There is another consideration which should give us strength and courage, when God inspires us to appeal to the zeal and to the pious generosity of the faithful. We ought to think and take for granted that even those who do not respond to our appeal will be edified by the trouble we take to secure the success of works in which it is evident we have no other interest than the glory of God and of religion. When they see that instead of deriving a material profit from these works, we contribute perhaps to the largest amount towards the payment of the expenses incurred, not only will they pardon our importunities, but they will admire the pious motive which leads us to apply to them for aid.

When it is for God, religion, and the poor, that we beg, we ought to fear nothing; every step we take is blessed; every solicitation that we address will elicit at least admiration and praises. We must indeed carry our importunities very far for them to become injurious to the ministry of a holy priest!

When we are seen to be always occupied in good works, sighing incessantly after the conversion of sinners, full of ardor to procure for the poor the relief their distress demands, multiplying ourselves daily that we may do in the bosom of the flock confided to us all the good which God inspires us to do; most infallibly we shall be generally regarded as holy priests and devoted pastors; and I repeat it, those who refuse to assist us will, with the others, extol the disinterestedness of our zeal, and the fervor of our charity.

300. But will there be very many to afflict us with such a refusal? No, assuredly no, replies experience, and an

invariable experience. Let a pastor make himself loved and venerated in his parish; let him be the living type of all those virtues which are the glory of the holy priest; let him always be the man of God, by the holiness of his life, the saviour of souls, by the ardor of his zeal, the benefactor and father of the poor, by the abundance of his alms, the consoler of the afflicted, by the tenderness of his charity; and he will see whether he will be left to walk alone in his charitable deeds; he will see whether the light purses do not rival the heavier, and sometimes even surpass them in liberality.

We knew a venerable Curé who thought it his duty, in a case of pressing necessity, to appeal to the generosity of his parishioners. He wanted to furnish his church with all the sacred vessels of which it was in absolute need. The appeal of the good pastor was heard by the flock. They ran from all quarters to the parsonage to lay down their offerings. A good and holy maid servant came in her turn, and placed in the hands of the Curé a purse so well filled that he refused to receive it. He knew that she who gave it was simply a servant; that the money the purse contained was the fruit of her savings, and that she would not have a penny left if he accepted the whole of her offering; he contented himself with ten francs, and returned the rest to his generous parishioner; but this occasioned an animated dispute and a vigorous struggle, in which the delicacy of the pastor and the liberality of the servant were almost equally to be admired. In short, although vanquished by the obstinate refusal which met her, she did not consent to take back her money before obtaining the formal promise that he would ask her for it again if the contributions of the parishioners were not sufficient to pay for the holy vessels that he wished to purchase.

301. Obstacles to the practice of good works are sometimes found to exist even in the pastor himself. We should not wish to mention them, for they reveal dis-

positions by no means honorable to a minister of Jesus Christ. It will be enough for us to allude to them.

Such priests leave to others the zeal of holy works, and themselves abstain from practising them, because they require activity, motion, quick and varied energy, whereas their character is made up only of weakness, apathy, and idleness.

They abstain also because these works involve greater or less expense, and the spirit of interest and avarice which, perhaps, animates them, shrinks from these expenses, and regards them as so many minor plagues. Sometimes, too, they renounce these works, fearing that their will is not sufficiently energetic or persevering to bring them to a good end, especially if they should be crossed by some unforeseen obstacle.

Others lead an easy, monotonous, and tranquil life; they revolve peaceably in the sphere of a little ministry, in the shelter of which they experience neither anxiety, agitation, nor annoyance; the enemy of all good will not fail to make them consider zeal for good works as the source of a thousand troubles and a thousand anxieties, and that is sufficient for them to adjourn their practice indefinitely.

The mere novelty of the thing silences and frightens them. They have never done such or such a thing, which, nevertheless, would assuredly produce in their parish the same good it produces in many others; this is quite enough to induce them to reject without hesitation any idea they might have had of engaging in them.

The Curés of an advanced age equally refuse to adopt extraordinary works of zeal, alleging that they are too old to occupy themselves with them, as demanding an activity of which they are no longer capable, and that the indispensable works of the holy ministry are already laborious enough for the little strength that yet remains to them.

Such are the evasions, more or less plausible, by the

aid of which men hold back from the holiest enterprises, which might conduce most abundantly to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. They sleep in deafness and blindness, and extinguish the fire of zeal instead of feeding the holy flame; to present themselves with almost empty hands at the feet of Him who has said: *Ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo nisi ut accendatur?*

302. Let us now say what are the good works to which a zealous pastor should most particularly apply himself. It will be easily guessed that we have no intention of enumerating here all the works of zeal which may be established in a parish. Such an enumeration, if it were exact, would need an entire volume, and not one simple chapter. We shall then only put our venerable brethren in the road, by pointing out to them as a matter of form, *verbi gratiâ*, the principal works that we specially recommend to their zeal.

303. And first, we advise them to occupy themselves with particular care in the decoration of their churches. It is manifest that a church always clean and well decorated speaks the pastor's praise. Persons judge of his piety, his disinterestedness, his spirit of order, his faith, and even of his zeal, for the spiritual good of the parish, by his zeal in the house of God. Without knowing the Curé of a parish, we may say, almost with certainty, merely by the inspection of his church, whether he is a priest after God's own heart.

A holy priest has always a church, if not rich, at least decent, and in perfect order; can we say as much of the priest who is animated by no piety; of the priest (if there are any such) worldly, dissipated, selfish, a stickler for routine, the lover of pleasure and good cheer? Ah! if the church of such a priest is remarkable for anything, is it not for its disorder and dirt? Let us, therefore, give a high idea of our holiness by a marked zeal for the house of God.

If our limited means are not sufficient for the decora-

tion of that holy house, let us show our parishioners that we do, at any rate, all in our power, and then let us boldly ask them to help us. If they know, and it will not be long before they do know, our zeal for the decoration of the church, the sacrifices we make, the privations we submit to, in order that the holy place may be always as worthy as possible of the majesty of the God who dwells there, most certainly the appeal that we make to their pious generosity will not remain unanswered. The parishioners in general, almost as much as their pastor himself, love to see their church magnificently decorated, and a single word is often enough to obtain an active and powerful co-operation.

To the work then, beloved brethren, to the work! Come, let us inspect together that holy church, in which every day you work so many marvels and mysteries of faith, so astonishing and so awful.*

304. First, let us stop a moment, before these statues. But they have nothing to please the eye.—Well, it is precisely on this account that we must consider them with attention. Why do they make the spectators either smile or sigh, unless it is that they are grotesque, unsuitable, and utterly unworthy of their prominent position? You are not shocked at them, venerable pastor; I can quite imagine it. You have seen them for so long that their gross defects no longer produce any disagreeable impression upon you. The eye which accustoms itself to everything, even to obscurity, so far as to take it for a half light, the eye, I say, passing a thousand and a thousand times over the same object, loses little by little its exquisite delicacy, and ends by finding, if not

* We beg our pious readers not to take offence at what we shall say in the following passage, and the manner in which we say it. We are far from wishing to criticise for the foolish pleasure of criticising; but there are certain abuses which are sometimes removed rather by innocent and well-timed pleasantry than by austere and serious reproof

beautiful, at least tolerable, that which is nothing less than ridiculous. You are not at all painfully affected, for your part, when you look at these statues; but if you could hear the malignant criticisms that strangers pass upon them, and your brother priests likewise, when they visit you, you would certainly make haste to introduce an important reformation in this matter.

And these pictures, worn out by age, which in more than one place show, through uncomely holes, the dirty walls behind; these pictures, whose subject we cannot discover through their veil of thick dust; these pictures, whose merit you strive to enhance, even attributing them to some great master, a point which we can, indeed, hardly contest, unable as we are to perceive what is represented; these pictures, confess it, dear brother, demand their successors, or, at least, cry out for the brush of some skilful restorer.

But the walls themselves, are they as they should be? If, when newly built, they were left white by the hands of the plasterer, the damp has since stained them green; the dust has blackened them, so that no one now can tell which of these three colors predominates.

And those old benches, which hardly stand upon their worm-eaten legs, and on which your parishioners sit down so cautiously; those benches unequal in height, in length, and breadth, which cause those who do not laugh to sigh; do they not also call for successors? Have they not served their time, and more than their time? Is it not true that they would be better placed in some antiquary's attic, than in the house of God?

Might we not, dear brother, also draw your attention to the flooring of your church; if we made an exact calculation, should we not find as many tiles missing as remaining? It would be almost better if there were none, as we find in many poor churches, which, however, has the great inconvenience of leaving the floor rough, uneven, and sometimes furrowed by deep gaps.

All this, we say it boldly, demands prompt and radical reform.

But what can we say of the sacred ornaments of some churches? What can we say of ornaments worn out, dirty, torn, and patched, which ought a hundred times to be discarded? We have often thought, painful as it is to say so, that such and such a cope, or chasuble even, was much dirtier than the priestly vestment used at the daily celebration of the Holy Mysteries. When these vestments are dirty, they are washed or cleaned; when torn, they are mended; when worn out, replaced; but, in some churches, in the sight and knowledge of their negligent pastors, what a degree of dirt and deterioration must be reached before the sacred ornaments are restored or replaced.

What might we not say also of these corporals of coarse linen, dirty, full of holes, darned all over, and so little worthy of touching every day the Holy Body of the Divine Saviour! And this chalice, in the bowl of which we vainly look for the traces of the gilding so universally and rigorously prescribed! And this ciborium, so mean, so common, and sometimes so small that it might be taken for a watch-box! And this remonstrance, mounted on the foot of an old candlestick, once very long ago plated! What reform does all this call for, and how much is the pastor to blame who does not perceive its indispensable necessity! Doubtless, in many places, it will be gradually, and not at one stroke, that these reforms will be carried into effect; but, with zeal and good-will, notable transformations will soon be seen, especially if he who levies a contribution from the purses of his parishioners does not forget to give from his own.

305. As connected with the decoration of the church, we would specially recommend the embellishment of the altar of the Blessed Virgin; and on this subject we shall ask of all pastors of parishes, and generally of every

priest: Would you acquire that reputation of piety and fervor which will make your ministry fruitful? After having established in your soul the most solid devotion to Mary, show that you love this good mother with a tender and truly filial love; show in every circumstance that you are zealous for the interests of her worship and her glory; have every instant her name on your lips; never enter the holy tribunal or the pulpit without saying at least some words upon devotion to Mary to your penitents or auditors. After having saluted Jesus in the Holy Sacrament at your daily visit, never leave the church without visiting the altar of Mary, were it only to say an *Ave Maria*, a *Memorare*, or ten beads of your chaplet. In a word, show by all your external conduct that you are a child of Mary, full of love for your tender mother, and most surely you will soon enjoy the reputation of a holy priest.

But if you have charge of a parish, do not rest contented with what we have recommended. Use all the resources and all the industry of your zeal towards the best possible decoration of the altar of Mary. Asking in the name of this divine mother, you will seldom meet with a refusal. Ask, then, and do not fear the reproach of importunity.

Take all necessary steps to procure a statue of our Blessed Lady; but in this respect, you must be hard, and very hard to please; if you have not full confidence in your own taste, ask the advice of others. Consider you want a statue which may speak to sinners, which may open its arms to them with kindness, which may smile on them with tenderness, which may draw and attach them by an inexpressible charm of celestial piety, such as very few artists know how to express in their works. The grace of modesty must be especially remembered; this point is not always observed with sufficient rigor.

If possible, besides the principal altar of which we

have spoken, it would be very desirable to have another consecrated to Mary suffering. There Mary would be seen holding the dead Jesus on her knees, or overwhelmed with grief, her heart pierced through by a sword. This would be the altar for the afflicted, and would, perhaps, be not the least frequented.

And again, when the altar or altars of Mary are erected, it will be well that the pastor should show the road to all the sheep of his flock; that he should inspire them with the most tender devotion for this good mother, and that he should at least render this devotion so popular in the neighborhood, that it should become one of the distinctive features of his parish. Flowers, embroidery, carpets too, all will be obtained from the zeal of the ladies of the parish, if there are ladies in the parish, or from those of the neighboring town, if he is obliged to go and ask afar off that which he does not find at home.

306. Amongst the important works which we recommend in this chapter we shall include the establishment of some pious confraternities, with which every parish should be more or less abundantly provided. All confraternities are assuredly good and holy; nevertheless, some tact is requisite to discover which are best suited to our parishioners. The Curé must not permit his own taste and personal fancy to decide the choice. It often happens that the confraternity for which he has a special affection is not the one which the parishioners prefer.

In general, those confraternities should be preferred which are most popular in the neighborhood. Those of the holy Virgin, it must be remembered, are the most acceptable on this account. We do not know that any is more universally popular than that of the Holy Scapulary, and we cannot too earnestly recommend that it should be established in every parish where it can be done. If this is impossible, all the parishioners should

be induced to enter this confraternity, by inscribing their names on the register of one of the neighboring parishes where it is established. In many dioceses we see pious pastors every year conducting in procession all the children who have made their first Communion to the parish where the Holy Scapulary is established; and nothing is more edifying than to see these young lambs enrolled for life under the banners of the divine Shepherdess.

The confraternity of the Holy Rosary, again, is very good, but it seems to us more particularly suited to the tastes of women, and rather of pious women. It is much less popular than the preceding.

That of the Holy Heart of Mary, a modern institution, and one which every day produces such marvellous effects in the Church of France, might be also advantageously established. It does not impose onerous obligations; a most important point.

The Perpetual Adoration, as established in some dioceses, is another infinitely precious confraternity. Each parish chooses one month of the year which it specially consecrates to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. This month takes the name of *The Month of Adoration*. All the pious parishioners choose during this month the hour most convenient to them, have their names entered on the register of the confraternity, and when this hour comes, they pass it in adoration before the most Holy Sacrament. In the dioceses where this institution exists, we see the Holy Table as much thronged during the month of adoration as during Paschal time.*

The confraternity of the Sacred Heart, so admirable in its object, might also be established with much ad-

* If any Curé desire information about this precious confraternity, they may obtain it from any ecclesiastics of the diocese of Coutances, and especially of that part of the diocese which once formed the ancient diocese of Avranches.

vantage, more especially for the devout ; for, unhappily, the large body of sinners cannot appreciate the delicacy of the love of which the heart of Jesus is the vast and inextinguishable furnace. However, every Curé should ascertain what is most suitable to his own parish; but one point we will not pass over, namely, fostering attention to the confraternities when once they are established.

We often see a highly zealous pastor establish a pious confraternity in his parish with great pomp and solemnity. It is a day of rejoicing to him and to the whole parish; a thorough fête-day. The register of the confraternity is scarcely opened before a multitude of brethren and sisters come to enroll themselves. Beautiful beginning! magnificent beginning! but, alas! too often a beginning without progress! For want of being kept up by the Curé, the fire of the confraternity gradually dies away, and sometimes, from the second year, three months, six months even, pass without a new name being entered. Let us, therefore, keep up our confraternities; let us make proof of their great advantages, and not let the work of God perish in our hands.

307. We wish to say a word of those pious associations, known in some places under the title of Confraternities, and in others under that of Congregations. Every week or fortnight a crowded meeting is held in some particular chapel, where prayers are recited, and accompanied with hymns; after which the director delivers an address appropriate to the spiritual wants of his hearers, and the service terminates by the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. We have often witnessed the excellent results of institutions of this sort. Nothing would be more advantageous for a parish than to be provided with two congregations of this nature; the one for men, the other for women.

One day, a pious, intelligent, and very zealous Curé told us that having been sent by his Bishop into a great

parish, left during eighteen years without a pastor, he had worked little miracles by means of a congregation of young women which he had established. Before his arrival in this parish, every Sunday dances were held, very far from edifying, if not, indeed, scandalous; and, without saying anything openly against these dances, he soon completely put an end to them, by enrolling, one after the other, without noise or disturbance, all the young women of the parish in the congregation of Mary. We may affirm that every clever and zealous pastor who will form an association of this nature in the midst of his flock would derive sweet and abundant consolation from it.

308. There is a work of modern institution which has already produced considerable fruits of salvation, and which we think it our duty to recommend especially to our readers. It is an association of ladies which was formed in 1849 under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. It has taken the title of *Notre Dame des bons Livres* (Our Lady of good Books). Its object is to prevent, as much as possible, the distribution of bad books, and to circulate good ones by the establishment of Catholic libraries.

This work is already widely spreading; it is approved and recommended by very many Bishops; and the Sovereign Pontiff himself has kindly given the association a solemn proof of his high esteem by granting to all who recite every day the *Pater*, the *Ave*, and the *Credo*, for the extension of the work, a plenary indulgence every month; and to those who recite the same prayers for the same end, an indulgence for three hundred days, to be obtained once every day.*

In proportion as we are delighted, on entering a church, to see the *Via Crucis* established there, so do

* A detailed account of this association may be obtained from Mazeau, bookseller at Nantes.

we regret to look in vain for the fourteen signs of that devotion so fruitful in grace and spiritual treasures. The Curé should consider the numerous indulgences to be gained for one's self, and for the souls in purgatory, and the facility with which they may be gained, and he will see whether he ought not generously to impose a slight sacrifice upon himself to enrich his parish with so precious an institution.

Set forth before your parishioners the immense advantages which it procures; delicately touch that chord of the human heart which is so sensitive when your auditors are carried in imagination into the burning dungeons of God's justice, to consider there the sorrowful state of their relatives and friends; then open a subscription for the purchase of the pictures, and place yourself at the head of this subscription with a good round sum after your name; you will see, wherever you are, whether you cannot realize this good work.

When it is established do not let it fall into disuse, as often happens; frequently revive the fervor of this devotion; impose it as a penance at the holy tribunal; publicly after vespers, once a month for example, go round the Via Crucis; and do not imitate a great number of ecclesiastics, who strongly recommend this holy exercise, yet never practise it themselves.

310. With respect to the Way of the Cross, as with respect to every confraternity, we think it our duty to make one very important observation. This observation refers to the official and regularly prescribed title which should attest the authenticity of the erection of the Way of the Cross or of the confraternity, a title which should be preserved in the archives of the church. Often essential formalities have been omitted at the time of its erection; and often, also, the report which was drawn up, or which is supposed to have been drawn up, has completely disappeared. It is for the Curé of every parish to ascertain whether all his confraternities are valid in their

constitution, and whether the pious faithful obtain the indulgences which they believe that they obtain. The thing is so important that it would be exceedingly wrong, we think, not to make serious inquiry into the matter.

Sometimes a Curé will think he may dispense with this inquiry, charitably presuming that his predecessor has fulfilled all the requisite formalities; but experience has more than once proved that it was well not to extend this charity so far, and that the more prudent course for the successor was to assure himself by actual inquiry that all was in order.

311. The work of works for one who would immediately and infallibly procure the salvation of sinners, is the work of Missions. We are so convinced of the truth of this proposition that not even the shadow of a doubt can enter our mind on this point. We beseech, we supplicate, we conjure our venerable brethren, with clasped hands and bended knees, at the feet of Jesus crucified, to lay aside their unjust prejudices, if they have any, against Missions, and to procure if only one for the parish they govern; they will see, even in this world, but far better in the next, how many sinners have been saved by this holy work; they will see how many a *Lazarus* whom they thought living, has been dead and corrupted more than thirty years, perhaps, at the bottom of his tomb, and whose resurrection is attributable only to the Mission which they have obtained for him.

Here, again, we say, the lamp of experience in our hand, that if a Curé has zeal, plenty of zeal, he will always find the necessary funds to defray the expenses required for a Mission. The work is generally reputed so glorious to God, and so useful to sinners, that all good souls think it a joy to contribute to its cost, and, as is very often seen, they are sometimes the first to stimulate the zeal of their pastor in this direction.

How beautiful would it be to see a venerable Curé im-

posing sacrifices upon himself, denying himself superfluities, that he may at a certain time find himself in a position to procure for his flock the inestimable benefit of a Mission! We know of more than one pastor who follows our recommendation in this. May the God of mercy bless them, these worthy pastors, who so well deserve to lead the sheep of Jesus!

When a Mission has been given in a parish, we cannot too strongly recommend to the Curés, the Curates, and generally to all the Priests of the neighborhood, to second and perpetuate its fruits. They often complain of the short duration of these fruits, and strangely attribute to the Missions, which are entirely guiltless, an evil attributable only to themselves. Call to remembrance again and again, that Mission which the demon strives to cast into oblivion; call to remembrance the beautiful and touching ceremonies which caused so many sighs and so many tears; call to remembrance the generous promises, expressed publicly and by acclamation, of serving God faithfully to the end of life. If you can, engage one of these Missioners who move so many hearts, to come and revive the springs of fervor; in a word, use all the means in your power to consolidate more and more the effects of that holy work, and be convinced that you will never procure more abundantly the glory of God and the salvation of souls than by a Mission.

Before quitting this important matter, we wish to make known a work far less known than it deserves. We discovered in one of our apostolic excursions, a parish in which a Mission had been established by foundation. A pious believer, justly appreciating the value of this good work, had the happy inspiration to establish it for perpetuity in the parish where he lived. Having ascertained the ordinary expense of a Mission, he gave a certain sum which was funded, the interest of which, annually received and accumulated by degrees, sufficed to assure a Mission to his parish every ten years. A happy and holy idea,

which will, we doubt not, bring many and eternal benedictions on its author.*

312. What might we not say on that most important matter, the schools for the instruction of children? Yet we shall say very little, for two reasons: first, because that work and all that belongs to it is universally appreciated by parish priests; secondly, because what we have said in Chapter VII. on the intercourse of the Curé with the master and mistress of the school will be enough to stimulate pastoral zeal.

However, we especially recommend the choice, as far as possible, of masters and mistresses of schools from members of congregations established for educational purposes. Whatever may be the merit of a lay school-master, he will never manage the children or instruct them like one who belongs to a religious society, and who has devoted himself by vow to the education of infancy. It is in everything that regards schools that a Curé recognizes how important it is to himself, or rather to the good of the parish, that perfect harmony should reign between the parsonage and the mayor's office. To avoid repetitions we refer the reader to Chapters VII. and VIII.

313. Our age has seen and still sees admirable works daily springing into existence under the warm influence of Christian charity. It will be guessed that I am speaking of houses of refuge for women and for infants, of the societies of St. Vincent de Paul, of St. Francis Regis, etc. All France resounds with the fame of these holy institutions, which are truly the glory of our country.

* Without retracting a word that we have said on the great advantage of Missions *in general*, we must confess, notwithstanding, that there is in some places an immorality so profound, an impiety so widely spread, a contempt for religion so decided, that Missions there would not produce any advantage, and perhaps might even occasion disorder. It is for every Curé to judge whether this work of zeal is suitable or unsuitable for his own parish.

Undoubtedly these works cannot be established in all parishes; but when an opportunity of introducing them seems presented, we ought to rejoice from the bottom of our hearts in thinking of the marvellous fruits which will result from it.

314. And the sick poor: ought we to forget, in speaking of good works, to recommend those societies which will procure for them the consolations and assistance that their sufferings demand? Every place, however small its importance, should have its Sisters of Charity; but as there are many parishes in which it is impossible to procure them, and as, even where they are established, they are not able to pass any length of time near the sick, we think it our duty to call the attention of the Curés to the useful institution of nursing sisters.

For a long time Paris alone possessed a congregation of this kind; but we see with pleasure that the holy example of the capital has been followed by the provinces. In many dioceses religious societies of nurses have been formed, which we know to have been instrumental in effecting much good.

We think that a Curé who knows how to set about it might often transform some of his pious female parishioners into nurses. He should insist upon the importance of this work; he should point out the abundant recompense to be looked for by those who practise it; he should declare all that the God of charity, who has promised that a glass of cold water shall not lose its reward, will do for the pious servant or the humble woman who will come with her work and pass long hours at the pillow of a suffering and forsaken invalid; he should say and do all this and whatever else his zeal may suggest, add most certainly he will succeed, and reap consolation beyond his hopes.

315. As for the poor in general, it is hardly necessary to say that they will be the especial objects of the pastor's care. Never let us forget that the title of father of

the poor is, in the eyes of the people, the highest honor for the priest who has succeeded in obtaining it by the abundance of his alms. If it be true, which we cannot doubt, since it is the Holy Spirit Himself who declares it to us, that *alms covereth a multitude of sins* in the sight of God, we may say that it produces a similar effect in the eyes of men, and that a priest, who on certain points would be severely judged by his people, will meet with nothing but kind indulgence from them when his little failings are under the shelter of his disinterestedness and charity.

Let us give plenteously to the poor, beloved brethren; let us invent works of charity which may help them; let us never visit the rich without pleading the cause of the indigent. Let us declare in public and in private the happy effects of almsgiving, not only for those to whom it is given, but also, and even more, for those who give. Let us persuade the rich to have a little money-box in their houses as the treasure-house of the poor; let us urge them to deposit in that box any sum they may be tempted to employ in the purchase of vain superfluities; let us recommend them to accustom their little children from the earliest age to drop into this box a portion of their pocket-money; advising them, at the same time, to train up their children in the practice of charity, and to accustom them to the personal distribution of their alms.

We have often been greatly edified to see ladies of high family applying themselves almost unceasingly to working for the poor. Not only did they buy the coarse stuffs with which they desired to clothe the poor, or cause it to be manufactured expressly; but they sat down themselves to make those clothes which were to cover the suffering members of Jesus Christ; and thus set throughout the whole country a holy example, which drew upon them universal benedictions. This same course should be frequently recommended by a zealous pastor to the rich ladies of his parish.

There is, again, another thing, too much neglected in many parishes, but which is, nevertheless, most excellent; it is to press, and that earnestly, upon the rich their duty of themselves visiting the poor in their miserable retreats. Persons in high life never dream how great is the distress, and how entire the destitution, in some of the houses of the poor. All that we can say in our conversations gives but a faint idea of it, and not unfrequently the hearer in his heart receives as eloquent exaggerations that which is, notwithstanding, but too real. But when the great and noble leaves his rich mansion to visit the retreat of the poor, when a lady who wants for nothing at home visits the needy who want for everything, even for the absolute necessities of life, she cannot fail to be forcibly struck by the contrast; it makes a profound impression on her; and experience proves that such a charitable visit does not produce merely a barren emotion.

316. These our recommendations respecting the poor remind us of a good work with which God one day inspired a Curé of our diocese, and which He blessed so bountifully that it was executed immediately with surprising facility.

One Sunday, when the Curé was reading to his parishioners the new scale of offerings that our worthy Bishop had just published, he paused for some seconds after the article of interments, and said simply, "You see, my brethren, from what you have just heard, that the poor, whose family cannot afford a Mass on the day of their burial, are interred without receiving that spiritual help which would be often so necessary to them. Do not murmur on this account against the ecclesiastical authority. Their Lordships, the Bishops, knowing how scanty are the incomes of very many Curés, cannot impose upon them the rigorous obligation of renouncing in such or such circumstances the fees of the Masses by which they are supported. This would be a most onerous

burden, especially in parishes where the poor are very numerous. With respect to the flock whose spiritual direction is confided to me, I could undoubtedly act with generosity towards the poor whose relations cannot pay the fee for a Mass on the day of their decease. I assure you, my brethren, that I should with great pleasure impose upon myself this light burden; but I avow I am restrained by the fear of injuring my successors. The customs adopted by a Curé always more or less bind his successor; and often, when by any cause he cannot continue the custom established by his predecessor, he draws upon himself reproaches and murmurs often exceedingly undeserved, as well as prejudicial to the success of his divine ministry. And yet, my brethren, I wish that our poor (for they are ours) should not be deprived of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the day of their interment. In order to secure this advantage, I will tell you what God, in His tender mercy, has inspired me with. I have endeavored to ascertain what sum as a principal would assure forever a Mass for each of our poor on the day of their decease, and I am satisfied that this most desirable object might be attained with the moderate sum of 600 francs.* I do not think I am wrong, my brethren, in believing that many among you will press forward in zeal and emulation to secure the success of a work which is so eminently charitable."

The next day he received a packet containing 600 francs from a pious lady of the parish, and for several years past the charity has been firmly established, and has produced the happiest fruits.

317. We must not conclude this chapter without pointing out one more work of zeal which is eminently useful, and which might easily be established in many parishes, as it is in that where we had the happiness of seeing it in operation. There exists in this parish a society of

* Equivalent to £24 in English money or about \$120.

pious ladies, who have formed themselves into a body to consecrate their life to the instruction of children. Desiring to complete the good work in their parish, they have established a free school for adults, which they call *Ecole Dominicale*, as being held on the Sunday. An hour before vespers, they assemble all the young women of the parish who are hindered by their work from coming on any other day. Part of the time is devoted to finishing their education in the three branches of reading, writing, and arithmetic; a class is then formed for religious instruction, in which their former Christian teaching is brought back to their memory, and explained with an accompaniment of pious exhortations, and good advice.

The happy results of such an institution can hardly be guessed. In many parishes, such a school might easily be established for young lads, and this school, free to all of course, will be sure to be thronged. We especially recommend this work of zeal to all parish priests.

CHAPTER XVII.

GENERAL INTERCOURSE WITH OTHERS.

318. OUR readers will be surprised that we should have reached the end of the second part of our work without speaking of the intercourse of the priest with his penitents at the confessional, with his hearers in the pulpit, and with the children in catechising. We owe our dear brethren some explanations on this point.

These three great points of intercourse are incontestably of immense importance, and blind indeed would he be who did not discover it at the first glance. But, as every one knows, plenty of excellent books upon these

subjects are already in the hands of all the clergy. After providing himself with the indispensable works on Theology and Holy Scripture, what candidate for holy orders is there, who, while at the seminary, or, at least, immediately after quitting it, does not procure the best standard works on the ministry of the priest at the holy tribunal, in the pulpit, and in catechising? We could only have repeated most imperfectly what many have said so well before us; it may be understood that we have restrained our pen before this consideration. Our purpose has been to treat certain matters which we deem especially important, and which seem to have been little touched upon by ecclesiastical writers.

Now, however, we shall give in this last chapter the recommendations which we judge most useful for catechists, preachers, and confessors.

ADVICE TO CATECHISTS.

319. Begin with a thorough conviction of the importance of your duties as catechist; never, in all your life as priest, will you fulfil any more useful office than this. Take care not to regard this employment as a function of secondary importance, or to undervalue it, because it has not the brilliancy of preaching, and because in exercising it you have to do only with children who fail to appreciate your talents. A priest actuated by these sentiments has not the least notion of true zeal, and may expect a terrible sentence at the judgment-seat of God.

320. Never forget that ignorance is the scourge of religion. Seldom, or never, indeed is our holy religion attacked by these, abandoned by those, coldly practised by the many, but for this reason,—that the first instruction has been imperfect, and neglected. Catechisms perfectly taught, and explained, are the seeds of life-long virtue, and a spring of endless remorse to those who are tempted in later years to abandon the way of salvation.

321. The parish where you exercise the holy ministry, and the state of which you lament so profoundly, is not, perhaps, susceptible of regeneration, except by the means of catechisms. The old people, it is a terrible misfortune, have never received any religious instruction; your sermons will not give them this instruction; your catechisms they disdain, the root of the edifice is ruined; rebuild it again from the foundation. The children! the children! they are the great hope for the future. Instruct them therefore by sound and careful catechising.

322. Will these catechisms be worth anything if you do not prepare them? To catechise with profit, requires more pains than sermons, though these, nevertheless, to be good, require time, study, and application. But, alas! because a pastor has only to speak to the children, he goes on to the time of catechising without having given it a thought; full of confidence in a certain readiness of language, he gives words for things, and the poor children, who think they have been fed, are sent empty away.

323. Do you wish to catechise with satisfaction, and with an almost infallible success? You must really love this divine ministry; if you do not love it naturally, pray God, by the intercession of Mary, to make you love it. And love the children also; oh! love them tenderly in God, and for God. You know whether Jesus loved them! They will love you if you love them. There will be no need of punishment in order to compel their attendance! They will come of themselves, and if there be from their heart to yours a flood-tide of divine love, oh! what good catechisings you will give these children! We bestow our pains so willingly upon those we love! We gladly submit to so much trouble, fatigue, and labor, to snatch from misfortune those who are dear to us.

324. Be so serious and grave with the children as not to have any necessity for severity. Have enough authority to keep them in order, and enough gentleness to attract and win them to you. None are quicker than

children and scholars to discover, from the first day, the weak and the strong side of their teacher. We have been struck with this fact over and over again, and have found it very difficult to account for; but after all, it is no less a fact. I warn you, whoever you may be, that the children will see from the first catechising, whether they can be inattentive, disobedient, whispering, idle, etc. Be careful, then, to behave in such a manner that from the first lesson they may clearly perceive that they will be compelled to be obedient, attentive, painstaking, etc.

325. Let your main point be kindness. Let it be known, without a suspicion of doubt, that you love your little flock, and that your great happiness is to be among them. Tell them often, and, better still, prove to them, by your great zeal for catechising, that your words are sincere. When you give a reproof, go as far as is necessary to produce the effect you wish, but not one degree farther; and even in giving this reproof let it be seen that kindness is ever at the bottom of your heart, and that, if your severity has encroached slightly on your kindness, it has not dethroned or expelled it.

326. Never let a coarse word pass your lips, never any offensive levity, or any bantering or buffoonery. Do not rest contented with loving the children, but treat them also with a sort of affectionate respect, avoiding any excess of familiarity. Whatever fault may be committed, never go so far as to strike the offender, and so commit a fault more grave than the one you wish to punish. The consequences of a punishment of this nature are sometimes exceedingly detrimental to religion and its ministers.

327. Make all your children learn the text of the catechism; it is a matter far more important than is generally supposed. It is even necessary to insist as much as possible upon their knowing all the lessons of the catechism, so as to be able to recite them with steadiness, and almost without a mistake. It is thus engraven in

their memory; and if, as children, they recite their lessons mechanically and without reflection, at a later period it will be otherwise; aided by reason, they will dwell all the more on a crowd of doctrinal points, which are recalled to mind by the long passages of the catechisms never yet forgotten. Never forget this important recommendation.

328. Be as clear as possible in your explanations, and never pass over a single word of the catechism without endeavoring to make it perfectly understood. Forget, if you can, that you yourself know the things to be explained, and look for their meaning with your children as if you were yourself ignorant of them. Ask yourself often, as you read the clearest parts of the catechism, whether a limited intelligence might not still find something obscure or ambiguous. If you do not attend to this, while you think you are instructing you will not instruct at all; at least, your teaching will be defective and incomplete. Catechists are greatly mistaken in thinking that the children must understand because they understand themselves.

329. Assure yourself, by the best means in your power, that your explanations are thoroughly caught by all your children, and do not pass to other points unless you are quite sure that there is no obscurity left in their minds on any of the points just explained. In order to ascertain that it is so, do not content yourself with questioning those who are well instructed; but address yourself rather to those whose intelligence is but little developed. Vary the language under which you clothe your questions; the sense will be the same, but the words being different you will see if the sense is thoroughly understood.

330. Here is a very important caution, which we should like to print in large letters on each page of the catechism, in order that the priest who explains it might have it constantly before his eyes: *Speak little, and make*

the children speak much. Almost all catechists are great talkers; this is a crying abuse. Think you in good faith, that your little children are following you through that long string of words and phrases, where you cease to be catechist, to become preacher? Think you that their little minds, which have not, which cannot yet have, any capacity, are able to follow and comprehend your long arguments and interminable proofs? Do you not see by their gestures, their behavior, their smiles, and, perhaps, by the pranks they play one with another, that their thoughts are far away from your explanations? Would you recall their attention? Nothing more easy. Break off your long details, and put a sudden question without immediately saying to whom you address it. Immediately you will see every head raised; no more whisperings, no more looking about, no marks of levity or weariness. Perfect silence. Why? Because each one fears to be obliged to speak in his turn.

But you say, Must we then be silent, and be contented with our mere presence among those children? No; but you must speak much less than you do, and only that you may rectify the inaccuracies of your children's answers. There is not one of your long and useless explanations which might not be most usefully given by dividing it sentence by sentence, and by making each sentence the matter of so many questions, to which you would oblige your children to reply. This will keep them constantly attentive, and exercise their intelligence marvellously. We repeat it, therefore: *Speak little, and make the children speak much.*

331. Excite emulation by all the means in your power. Allow taking places in the class; give good marks; promise rewards; make the children argue one against the other on any point that you wish to make clearly and fully understood; promise a reward to the conqueror. Nothing is more powerful than emulation on the minds of children.

332. Be provided with a good selection of interesting and edifying historical anecdotes. It is necessary that the children should be habituated to listen with pleasure to all that you relate; for then they will always be looking forward to something new and interesting to raise their curiosity. Tell them at the commencement of the catechising, or when you see them a little less attentive, that you have an interesting story to relate, but that if they wish to hear it, they must be very attentive to the end. Place this story after the little moral exhortation, which should never be omitted, and which should follow naturally from the lesson that has been explained. Give this exhortation in a paternal and impressive tone, and never forget to convince your children more and more that you have an interest in them which increases every day.

333. Do not neglect hymns; singing pleases children; rouses them, and prevents them from thinking of their play. Try to make them learn a great number by heart; they will sing them instead of bad songs, and this will edify the parish. Collect them together from time to time, at the parsonage or elsewhere, to teach them singing. Make every one sing, except those who, having no ear, might put the others out; and sing only those hymns, the air of which is easy for them to catch. As a general rule, those which the people do not easily learn should be rejected, even from collections of hymns. For hymns are for the masses, and not for a few privileged voices which give no impulse to the congregation.

334. Act in concert with the schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, in order to make them your zealous fellow-workers. Tell them often to insist particularly on the catechism. Explain to them the extreme importance of the religious instruction of children. The schoolmaster often relies on the Curé for this, and the Curé relies in some degree on the schoolmaster; this is a danger that must be avoided. Each should labor to instruct the

children as if he alone were charged with the task. Children can never be too well instructed in their religion.

335. Lastly, study, and study thoroughly, *La methode de Saint Sulpice*, in order to catechise well. We have nothing better than this method. Do not be frightened at its length and apparent complication; when you understand it perfectly, you will not find it difficult. Nevertheless, if there are any points that you cannot observe in your parish, do not be uneasy. If you can establish catechisms of perseverance to strengthen the children who have made their first Communion in the practice of holiness, you cannot picture to yourself the glory you will procure for God, the good you will effect for the parish, and the abundant consolations which will inundate your soul; *Euge! Euge! Serve bone et fidelis!*

ADVICE TO PREACHERS.

336. The first thing required is a conviction of the importance, or rather of the indispensable necessity of preaching. To oppose the unbelievers, to rouse the fears of the licentious, to convert the sinners, to strengthen and perfect the just, to sanctify all by pointing continually to hell and its miseries, to heaven and its delights; what is more important and more worthy of our study, our labor, and all the resources of our love?

337. This divine ministry is infinitely useful in its nature; if it be otherwise in our hands, it is because we exercise it badly; by our evil nature we spoil it, we change it, we in some way pervert it.

Let us be saints, and we shall infallibly be excellent preachers. "The first advice that I give you," said Father Lejeune, in his simple way, "is to pray earnestly to God; the second is, to pray earnestly to God; the third, the fourth, the tenth, is to pray earnestly to God." Who preached better than Jesus? But who prayed like

Him? *Erat pernoctans in oratione Dei . . . et egressus ibat secundum consuetudinem in montem Olivarum.*

Saint Dominic, that zealous preacher who drew away whole nations, was so diligent in prayer, that in the town of Touïouse, and in the various monasteries where he stayed, they cannot say where his room was, because the choir of the church was his room, his place of study, and his library. It is there that he learned the art of preaching well.

338. Prayer, as we have recommended, will certainly inspire you with the fire of zeal, and with this fire you will inflame every heart with divine love. Examine yourself carefully. Is zeal burning at the bottom of your heart? Are you deeply moved by the pitiable state of sinners? Do you feel that you could make great sacrifices for their conversion? Would you readily give a considerable sum of money to procure for these poor sinners the immense benefit of a Mission, on which depends, perhaps, the eternal salvation of many of them? Ah! if you possess no zeal, how can you expect to preach? What will you do in the pulpit? What flame will you kindle with your ice? Go! go! and get zeal, much zeal, a vast furnace of zeal, and then ascend the pulpit; you will be worthy of your post.

339. Fly from the world, and only appear in it to sanctify it by silent sermons, which the lovely virtues of kindness, charity, simplicity, and modesty preach so well. We address these words to the pastors of parishes; for if you are exclusively a preacher or confessor; if, for example, you are a Missioner, do not leave your solitude except to enter the confessional or the pulpit. The less people know your private life, the more highly esteemed you will be in their minds. The proverb says wisely: No man is a hero to his *valet-de-chambre*. The world knows nothing of this hero beyond his great deeds; but his attendant knows his littleness.

340. So feed yourself upon the holy Scripture and

Theology, that you never open your mouth in speaking to the congregation without showing that your whole life is spent in these two great arsenals of the preacher. Without Holy Writ your discourses will be nothing more than skeletons, without nerve or muscle, or anything that tells of life; the *spiraculum vitæ*, the breath of life, will not be there. Without a solid groundwork of dogmatic and moral Theology, there can be neither self-confidence nor exactness; opinions thrown out at a venture, sometimes even heresy, combined with obstinate self-conceit.

341. Feed likewise upon the writings of the ascetics. You cannot imagine, when you have read and re-read many of them, what precious elements you possess for the composition of useful discourses. Once imbued with the spirit of these ascetics, you can speak with astounding facility, you hardly know the sources of the abundance of excellent reflections which spontaneously present themselves; and soon, in reading some pious author for a second time, you find the same reflections that struck you by their justice in the previous reading. Grenade, Rodriguez, St. Francis de Sales, St. Jure, Père Judde, with many others, should be incessantly and repeatedly read. Never forget to make a methodical book of notes, where the good thoughts found in reading may be entered in alphabetical order.

342. When a priest has received his mission to preach, he must prepare himself carefully, and not be slow in exercising this holy ministry; for let him be ever so little nervous, experience teaches that the longer he puts off his first sermon, the greater his dread of preaching. Sometimes even experienced preachers, who have allowed a considerable time to elapse without entering the pulpit, have great difficulty in resuming their place, and can hardly overcome the temptation of giving up preaching entirely.

The idea of not preaching when able to do so is a diabolical temptation, which must be vigorously resisted by

the thought that we hear the voice of Jesus crying in our ears: *Ite, docete omnes gentes.*

343. Preachers have to battle with three great temptations: idleness, pride, and jealousy.

It is idleness which withdraws the priest from the pulpit, although he may be fully qualified to preach successfully; it is idleness, also, which makes him enter the pulpit without sufficient preparation.

It is pride which inspires him with the desire of preaching in important places; pride which induces him to choose subjects which are pompous and brilliant, yet, in reality, of very little profit; pride which prompts an ornate phraseology, in the hope that the congregation will admire it as elegant and well turned; pride, again, which prompts the preacher to seek his own glory in this divine ministry, and sends him, after his sermon, hunting up insipid compliments from every one he meets.

It is jealousy, the daughter of this vice, which, if listened to, induces this or that Curé, for example, to prevent his Curate from preaching, for fear that the parishioners should say that the Curate preaches better than himself; jealousy which makes him pass a malignant criticism on a brother preacher who has had great success in his preaching; jealousy, also, which makes him hear without sorrow that a brother preacher is not liked nor followed, or that he has experienced a humiliating failure.

Assuredly, we do not think there is a single priest animated by such feelings; but any one who should have these three vices, or only one of them, would have great need to preach to himself in retreat before preaching to others. How can he think that Jesus will choose him to be the instrument of His grace and mercy?

344. What kind of instruction must we adopt? If you are a Curé, your habitual discourse should be *prônes*. "The *prône*," says M. de Villiers (*Egarements des hommes dans la voie du salut*), "that is to say a discourse, which

includes at once doctrinal and practical instruction, is not the work of the young orator; there is needed learning, meditation, and sound sense. Curés say, and with reason, that every one is bound to be present at the *prônes*. But would they free themselves from sharing the negligence of their parishioners in this respect? It will be by placing them in the wrong, in preaching such *prônes* as they ought to preach; that is to say, by the endeavor to instruct them perfectly in their duties, and in the thorough knowledge of religion and the Gospel. Where *prônes* of this kind are neglected, the fault is on the side of the parishioners only."

345. Explain in these *prônes* with clearness, precision, and method, the *Apostles' Creed*, article by article; the *Ten Commandments*, the *Commandments of the Church*, the *Sacraments*, the *Mysteries of our Lord* and of the *Blessed Virgin*, the *Seven Deadly Sins*, the *Lord's Prayer*. Here is matter for a complete course of excellent *prônes*. The Curé who does not follow this method, and who, instead of *prônes* of this character, gives his parishioners fragments of grand sermons, in which, confining himself to a single point of morals, he leaves them in ignorance of the numerous and important details of Christian doctrine, essentially fails in one of his most sacred duties. If the parishioners, instead of the instruction they ought to receive, find in the discourses of their pastor merely the ill-arranged tatters of a sterile eloquence, which leaves them plunged in their ignorance, woe to that blind pastor who will not see that this ignorance must be laid to his charge!

346. Must great sermons, then, be given up? By no means. Preach one from time to time; it will be only right. On high festivals, the simplicity of a *prône* does not harmonize so well as the pomp of a special sermon. Such a sermon will contrast agreeably with the routine of the more familiar instructions; you would even do well to invite a stranger to preach on these occasions.

Again, special sermons are very suitable for the two great seasons of Advent and Lent. Nothing can be more useful in Lent than the course we have known adopted with great success in many parishes: we allude to a novena of instructions and prayers for the conversion of sinners. This determines many conversions, and is an excellent preparation for all for the duties of Easter.

347. But you wish for great sermons. Then invite some missionary priests, and procure for your parish the immense advantage of a Mission. Dear and beloved brethren, if you have, as many have, old prejudices against Missions, we entreat you, conjure you, to cast them away forever. Listen: to dissipate your mistaken notions, if ever there is a Mission in your neighborhood, perform an act of zeal; obtain permission to occupy a confessional in the church of the Mission. You will not have been seated there three days, before all your prejudices will have vanished. At the sight of so many souls in a state of sacrilege, of so many hardened sinners, who, now fully converted, will burst into tears; of so many revengeful persons who will embrace their enemies on leaving the church; of so many unjust detainers of another's property who will make enormous restitutions, you will own yourself vanquished and totally disarmed: No, you will say, no, we did not know what a Mission was! And at once you write down your name as desiring a Mission for your own parish.

If this were the fitting place we would undertake to annihilate completely all objections that are brought against Missions; objections which are not always brought with perfect sincerity, but which are often merely a veil concealing the real reasons for opposing a work of zeal, the high importance of which is in reality acknowledged.

348. Conversation classes, or *conférences*, are also very useful, provided that they are well managed, and at the same time popular in the parish. Generally these *con-*

férences have little success in towns; in the country, on the other hand, they are much liked. It is necessary to avoid all trifling, or excessive merriment, and the wish to shine in making objections and thus embarrassing the priest who presides.

Another very useful thing is a course of more advanced spiritual instruction for the members of a confraternity or congregation, if the priest is so fortunate as to have one in the parish.

349. Let us come now to composition. What subject must be chosen? Your repertory of sermons is not complete if you have not plenty on doctrine and morals.

Go through every point of doctrine in good sermons, well worked up with the help of the best authors, selecting particularly those points which infidelity has singled out for attack. Consult some learned priest to know whether your proofs are strong, conclusive, and well put.

As for points of moral, the field is immense; but the subjects are far from being all equally useful. Always select those which you believe conscientiously, and before God, to be the most useful to the mass of your congregation. If a vice is not common in your neighborhood, do not preach a special sermon against it. We have heard terrible sermons against human respect in churches where, perhaps, not one believer was the slave of it. Do not say, then: "Oh, what a beautiful subject! What magnificent developments it admits of! I am sure I could treat it in a brilliant manner; here I begin." And I, for my part, say to you, "Do not write if your subject is only beautiful, and if you have a multitude of others incomparably more useful to your people. From amongst a multitude of precious stones should you choose the most brilliant if you knew it was the least valuable?"

350. Treat, and treat strongly, the chief truths of religion: Sin, the Delay of Conversion, Salvation, Death, Judgment, Hell, Heaven, the Mercy of God, etc. Do

not follow the example of some preachers of our day, who believe that the flames of hell should be, if not extinguished, at least ignored, as if it were right that the Gospel of our Divine Master should not be preached in all the severity of its doctrines, after the commencement of the nineteenth century. Preach, therefore, boldly, and after the apostolic example, these great truths; but do not let yourself be carried away beyond due bounds; be exact, perfectly exact. The truths of which we speak are fearful enough in reality, without the addition of imaginary terrors.

351. Should we write, or not write? Yes, and no; it depends on circumstances. Are you young? Write, write without hesitating an instant. Whatever be your talent, your facility of language, write. Believe me, my young brother, it is a friend who speaks to you. You have more imagination than groundwork, or rather, you have not, you cannot yet have, any groundwork; you have, I tell you, merely a natural facility, merely aptness and imagination. When this imagination loses, year by year, its coloring and its fire, and you see it every day as it were shedding its leaves, if you have not written at the beginning of your ministry, you will be reduced to a pitiable indigence.

But attend to these conditions, if you have already been several years in the ministry; if you have thoroughly studied Holy Scripture, Theology, the ascetics, and preachers of reputation; if you have acquired experience, if you have matured your ideas, disciplined your imagination, studied the world, without however frequenting it, sounded the human heart, without sharing in its misfortunes; lastly, if, with all this, you have that exalted piety which God always blesses, and great facility of language, I shall tell you not to forswear writing entirely, but to content yourself with preaching from notes. Have a well-arranged plan in which to place, each in its turn, your principal reflections. In order to put yourself in

train, and to commence your sermon with confidence, you will do well, perhaps, to write your exordium; and in order to carry your audience with you by an energetic peroration, you may write this also at length. It seems again, that you should do the same thing as regards one or two passages of the body of the sermon, from which you hope for a special effect, with full liberty, nevertheless, to omit these passages, if during the delivery you feel yourself warmed with the sacred fire, and disposed to speak from inspiration and consciousness of power anything preferable to your written words.

352. If you do not possess the gift of extempore preaching, or only imperfectly, write; otherwise you will be, especially on occasional unlucky days, intolerable to your hearers. You will say nothing but commonplaces, you will hum and haw even in saying them, in addition to your eternal repetitions. Repetition! repetition! it is the curse of the congregation, and a vice unhappily too common in extemporary preachers.

Every man, whatever his talent, has a certain order of ideas which are his own, and of which he can never divest himself. In his sermons, however diversified in their character, he returns repeatedly by one road or another to his ordinary details. His hearers are heartily sick of them, and, what has often surprised us, the most ignorant among the hearers remark these perpetual repetitions, and make them the subject of criticism.

353. What style should the preacher adopt in the treatment of his subjects? The severe or the quiet style? The impetuous or the winning and pathetic style? It is clear that this depends much on the subject. Nevertheless, every one has a style peculiarly his own, and in all his sermons, whatever they may be, the characteristics of this style are easily distinguished. The mild-tempered man does not treat a severe subject as a man naturally austere, and the austere man does not treat a subject of unction as one of gentle disposition would do

Each should follow his own style, and be *himself*, that is to say, perfectly natural.

The severe preacher, who wishes to put unction into his words, does not know how to set about it; thus, the hearts of his hearers are no more moved than his own. The man of gentler disposition, on the contrary, who begins to storm, excites the smiles of his congregation; no one can believe he is angry. Follow, then, I repeat it, your own natural bent.

Nevertheless, we say to those who are naturally harsh, that they would do well sometimes to be persuasive, or at least to display marks of sympathy with their hearers. They, being unaccustomed to these evidences of interest, will be the more affected and grateful.

Following our argument, we suggest to those who are naturally gentle occasionally to put aside their gentleness, and to adopt a more energetic and, in some degree, vehement one, when their subject requires vigor; because their hearers, accustomed to see them so gentle, will infer that the truths they now proclaim must be of the utmost importance, very terrible indeed, since they cannot preach them without putting off their ordinary style of moderation, calmness, and gentleness.

354. We often hear it said: Such a preacher is deep such another is superficial he has no system of doctrine the missionaries have more fire than depth, etc. Let us explain ourselves.

There are, it seems to me, three entirely distinct orders of preachers, who treat evangelical truths differently, regarding them under different aspects.

The first go to the bottom of these truths; they study their profoundest details, and expound them scientifically, in what we may call a philosophico-theologico-Christian manner.

The second do not investigate these truths very deeply, or by the light of any extraordinary theological learning; but they develop them sufficiently to teach the

parishioners the dogmatic and moral doctrines of Christianity, and to win their affectionate acceptance.

Lastly, the third do not treat of, but only glance at, these truths; and then, having barely pointed to them, dazzle their hearers by a frivolous eloquence; or rather, they present to the imagination an entire gallery of pictures, which they imagine seductive; or, at least, they try to soften the heart by sentimental rhapsodies.

What is to be said of these three styles? The first, I believe, is not generally popular. It is suitable only for some particular audiences, composed, not of women, but of men accustomed to serious study, and possessed of more than common intelligence. Yet we must, even in speaking to such hearers, carry them from time to time from the depths of dogmatic teaching to that holy mountain where Jesus preached the most sublime truths with a divine simplicity. With this finish, the first style may procure the glory of God, and the salvation of souls. It will, however, seldom be popular with the great body of the people, who are generally overpowered by dogmatic preaching.

The second style is eminently popular; it is good, very good, especially if it borrows from the first its accuracy and method, and from the third, a little more coloring, energy, and sentiment. It is the style adopted, and most wisely, by missionaries. By its aid they drive before them entire populations in the way of salvation. A grain more of simplicity and familiarity, and you have the pastoral instruction, the *prône*.

The third style possesses nothing serious or useful. It is a flash, a hollow phraseology; flowers instead of fruit.

355. However severe your character, never think yourself authorized to offend your hearers by bitter and sharp reproofs, or by offensive personalities. How many churches, alas! have echoed with these personalities, which scandalize the parishioners and rouse inextinguishable hatred against the pastor.

Never, therefore, indulge in personalities, direct or indirect; be true to this rule, as if you had vowed its scrupulous observance; never even make observations on any little disturbance in the church, in that angry tone which affects the congregation so painfully.

More than once we have been shocked at seeing a preacher, at the very moment that we thought him full of emotion, stop short to utter a sharp reprimand, and immediately afterwards resume the sentimental tone of unction, which this time affected nobody. When a little noise or disturbance arises in the church, say nothing, but be silent a minute; turn towards the spot whence the noise proceeds, or, at the utmost, rap gently with the hand two or three times on the side of the pulpit; this will effectually restore calm and silence. (We ask pardon for a digression which has interrupted the thread of our ideas.)

356. What should be the principal characteristics of our style? It must be clear, perfectly clear, so that our sermons may be thoroughly understood by all. "In every sermon you compose," says Père Lejeune, "always consider what profit a servant or mechanic may derive from it. . . . It is a serious mistake to wish to please thirty or forty learned persons by an elevated discourse, and to leave the greater number of your listeners unfed. Rest assured that the great and the learned are delighted with the preacher who, full of zeal, instructs and affects the people, however familiar and homely his sermon."

Your style should be finished, but not at the expense of clearness; for if compelled to choose between finish without clearness, or clearness without finish, you must without hesitation sacrifice the finish to clearness, as did St. Augustine, who used a barbarism to avoid the appropriate word, which would have been "amphibological."

Your style should be natural, and without a shadow of pretension or affectation.

It should be precise, too; say all that is necessary to express your meaning perfectly, and nothing more. Excessive conciseness is prejudicial to clearness, and gives a repelling dryness and sententiousness to the style; excess of detail, long explanations, fatigue and weary. Take the middle course between these two extremes, and make it the rule of your style.

357. What shall we say of that extravagance which may be called *romancing*? We shall say first, that indistinctness exists in many minds upon this subject. There is a detestable romancing to which, happily, the common-sense of the public has done justice in such a way that it dare not show its face. I speak of that which consists in disguising all its expressions so artistically, in painting them with such a motley of delicate colors, in bedizening them with so much frippery and tinsel, in decking them with such a glitter of gems, in blazoning them with such flashes of light, that they dazzle the whole congregation, making some laugh and others sigh, sending the poor people away shaking their heads, and saying that they really do not know in what language they have been addressed. We say nothing of this romancing; it is condemned, and dead, we sincerely hope, forever.

Very good! say many of my readers; well, romancing is judged as it ought to be. Stay; there are preachers whom you, perhaps, and many others regard as romancers, and who would yet ratify, word for word, all that we have said against the romancing which we have pronounced detestable. If these preachers really are romancers, we must conclude that there exists another style of romancing; and this is the case. What is this other style, and how may it be recognized? Let us try to give some notion of it.

Ordinarily it is not obscure; far from it. It is clear, very clear. It does not muffle its ideas in insipid finery; rather, it casts them among the hearers in all their native roughness. The preacher would paint all he says to

the life; the commonest comparisons, the oddest thoughts, the plainest language, such as was never before heard from the pulpit; all this, if the thoughts of the speaker find utterance as he conceives them, as he would paint, and hammer, and mould them; all this, I say, suits him, and answers his purpose exactly. He is striking in his manner, cutting in his hits, original in his illustrations, grotesque in his metaphors, and, to sum up, under this rolling fire of eccentricities, the congregation remain struck by I know not how many different sentiments which cross and jostle each other in their minds, without the possibility of harmonizing. Every one looks inquiringly at his neighbor, and asks himself: Well, what sort of language is this; is it good? or is it bad? Ought we to admire or to laugh? to praise or to condemn? Without troubling himself how these questions are answered by his congregation, the preacher pursues his course; it is rapid, brusque, abrupt; it stops at no obstacle; if he meets a precipice, he is delighted; he first enjoys the pleasure which a vanquished difficulty will afford; he pushes right on to the goal, and clears the abyss at a bound, without troubling himself, as some brethren of the old school would do, by going round it, and following paths which, if much longer, are yet more sure and more connected.

Well! is not this a style of romancing quite different from the first? It owes its birth to Victor Hugo, who has, it cannot be denied, a large number of imitators, and counts some even in our pulpits. What is to be thought and said of this romancing? We shall give our opinion upon it guardedly, hoping that it may approve itself to our readers. Well, we think that this romancing, of which we have not drawn the most flattering portrait, is not altogether bad; and that, if we submit it to a sort of literary eclecticism, separating the pure metal from the mass of alloy which hides it, we shall find something which will be acceptable to everybody.

The romancers of whom we speak have been struck by one thing in reading their predecessors; they have seen that such and such a truth, which has been expounded, unfolded, minutely detailed in a long page, and sometimes in two or three, might have been presented with more clearness, precision, and energy, in a few lines, and often with two or three strokes of the brush. Well! is not this true? Have we not often sighed as we saw the long windings followed by the preacher in order to arrive at a truth which had been apparent at his first words? Undoubtedly the application of this principle is difficult, and requires judicious and delicate management; but the difficulty of the application of a principle should be no reason for its rejection.

Besides, this style of romancing is not so new as one might think, and many traces of it are found in our great and sublime Bossuet. We will quote a single instance. As that incomparable orator, preaching upon Madame de la Vallière's taking the veil, wished to point out the immense difference between her past and present life, who would have ventured to paint this double picture in six words? Would Bourdaloue? Would Massillon? We say more, would any but Bossuet? No; he alone can do it; and how will he do it? By one of those touches which Victor Hugo and all his imitators would have applauded for an hour.

Madame de la Vallière having become Sister Louise de la Misericorde, was in a tribune beside the queen. All eyes were turned to this tribune when Bossuet exclaimed: *Qu'avons-nous vu? Que voyons-nous?—Quel etat! et quel etat!*

Where can be found, we ask, a detailed description which says so much, and with so much force, as these few words? In the oratorical works of Bossuet there are, and in profusion, touches of this kind.

We must, then, confess that there are some good things

in the miscellaneous romancing of the present day. The selection is yet to be made. We may leave the task to time and good sense. Meanwhile do not push on too fast, and beware of the ridiculous and the grotesque.

358. To return to our humble warnings. When you wish to compose a sermon, see if you are in the mood. If you feel great repugnance to writing; if you feel any physical uneasiness which affects your brain; if you twist your pen twenty times between your fingers without arriving at a single good thought; or if, having the good thought, you cannot find a single suitable phrase to express it, take my advice and put off your work, or you will waste much time in doing nothing. Perhaps you are absent; perhaps some preoccupation fatigues your mind; perhaps also you have not thought of offering a fervent prayer to God to obtain His help and blessing on your work; an important point, which must never be omitted.

If your momentary inaptitude be referable to none of these causes, endeavor to rouse yourself by reading some piece of eloquence which may affect you deeply. A few pages of Bossuet have often produced the best results.

359. The next day the scene is changed; the icy coldness is succeeded by a lively warmth, a sparkling fire, which courses through the veins, and reaches the heart. The pen! The pen! . . . Stop: before the pen, prayer, invariably prayer. You will see that the pen will but move the quicker, and be far more eloquent.

Well! let us now sit down to write; and, first, a text; for we do not think this should be given up, although some persons seem to think the use of a text obsolete. Why should we not put a heading to our sermons, as fashionable writers do on the title-page of their works? See that your text clearly indicates the subject of your sermon; take pains, too, that the subject follows from it naturally, as the germ springs from the seed that contained it.

Avoid all long exordiums! The hearer does not give his entire attention during the exordium; he is preparing to listen; he settles himself, he turns a little to the right, a little to the left, to throw a last glance all round; then at last he seats himself comfortably, and only pays serious attention to what the orator will say after the *Ave Maria*. Why, then, prolong a part of the sermon which ordinarily produces so little effect? Why, above all, prolong it so that the hearer finishes by taking it for the first point, and gets impatient and annoyed when he hears the *Ave Maria* announced, on which he no longer reckoned? Push on as quickly as possible to the exposition of your plan, and be careful not to keep your hearers in suspense during three quarters of the exordium, in such a manner that they cannot tell on what subject you are going to preach till the moment of the division.

360. As to divisions, are they needed? Yes. Must they be very numerous, and very detailed? No. Do not lose yourself in these inextricable labyrinths, where your hearers cannot follow you. To what purpose, I pray you, is this announcement of divisions, subdivisions, and sub-subdivisions, giving to your sermons the appearance of a genealogical tree, where the steps are counted up to the twentieth, or even beyond? Give out, and explain clearly two or three good reflections, such as perfectly and adequately comprehend your subject; then develop each one of these reflections, following, if you will, your several divisions in their order, but without expressly mentioning them. In this manner all is coherent, and the hearers are satisfied.

As to perorations, guard against tacking half a dozen of them one upon another, especially if you extemporize; never speak twenty minutes after having said *To conclude*. Nothing so fatigues an audience as this perpetual announcement of a conclusion that never arrives. Let your peroration be earnest, affectionate, and closed with spirit.

361. We come now to delivery. How much might be said, if our limits allowed fuller details! But we must not anticipate. In passing to the pulpit, observe profound recollection, perfect modesty, a bearing pious and, were it possible, angelical. Adore the Blessed Sacrament with fervor; place your heart within that of Jesus, and join to your own the hearts of all your congregation. Pass through the crowd without looking at anything. Make your way quietly to the pulpit, and plunge anew into the depths of prayer.

When all is quiet, begin. But what is this? I see your lips move, and I hear nothing; are you speaking or not?—I am speaking.—We hear nothing, absolutely nothing. Is it a standing rule that nobody should hear a word of the exordium? One would really think so, seeing the care that you take to lower your voice so that not a single word can be heard, even close under the pulpit. What is the more singular, is that the preacher who speaks so low has a voice naturally very strong, one which will soon make itself heard in peals of thunder. Avoid this fault. It is not natural.

362. What we said of composition we repeat of delivery: be natural, be yourself. Articulate every word perfectly, and especially the last words of your sentences. * Give to each expression its appropriate force; speak with confidence, but without boldness; be rather slow than rapid; do not think about your gestures, but, nevertheless, do not allow yourself any that are ridiculous; let them be natural and dignified; stand upright, without stiffness; look at your audience in the mass, and not at any one in particular. Do not lean your elbows on the sides of the pulpit. Seat yourself when you state or when you explain anything; rise when the discourse becomes more animated, and when you are coming to a stirring point.

Such are the principal rules concerning oratorical delivery; but they are so often transgressed that we think

it our duty to mention some of the most notorious offenders.

363. First of all, beware of monotony. Hardly any preachers are so fatiguing to their hearers as those whose delivery is monotonous. Some recite their sermons almost *recto tono*, on one single note, without either inflection or action, as if it were the refectory-reading of a seminary. Others have two or three modulations of voice; but as these are continually the same, and keep returning at regular intervals, a monotony is produced which irresistibly sends to sleep even those very persons who, before the sermon, were least of all inclined to nod. How can they avoid seeing how unnatural it is to speak three quarters of an hour in the same tone, or with one or two inflections which never vary?

The man who preaches thus, will argue in the most natural and animated manner with a friend. Look at him; he makes himself master of the conversation; he lays down the subject of controversy; he states his opinion; he supports it with solid and convincing proofs, or, at least, with those that he believes such; he enlarges upon them with vigor and precision; then he combats the objections of his adversary with increasing warmth, and all this in the most natural and varied tone; he is so animated that he forgets he has to enter the pulpit in a few minutes; he is reminded of his duty; he quits his friend, reaches the church, and is now in the pulpit; he has taken leave of his natural manner. The monotony is beginning again, here is the *recto tono*, or the three regular inflections. Is it not astonishing!

364. Others have the sentimental delivery; it is a variety of the monotonous style; they join to the identity of sound a tone elevated, supplicating, plaintive, and, in one word, sentimental, and in the last degree unnatural. There is in their delivery something, we might say, much, of that piously supplicatory tone adopted by the poor who beg for alms on the roadside; like these mendicants

also, they look up to heaven, or hold their head continually bent upon one shoulder; in this manner the whole sermon is preached, even such words as often require a tone of vehement and holy passion.

365. Others, again, have more fire, indeed far too much. We might say that they look upon a sermon as a failure, unless they bawl it out from one end to the other, without once lowering their voice. The ears of their hearers tingle, they pity the preacher, whom they suppose must be sadly fatigued; but they never think of profiting by the sermon.

A distinguished physician, one day, hearing a preacher who had this fault of bawling, told us afterwards, that he had been much less occupied with the sermon than with the fear of some accident happening to the preacher. In good faith, is it in speaking thus that we gain hearts? Is it not rather thus that we chill and repel them?

366. Some go even farther in their impetuosity. Not only do they bawl, which is for them natural enough, but their body and all their limbs are in a state of perpetual agitation, as if they were electrified. They stamp upon the floor of the pulpit, while their hands, or rather their fists, beat its sides: the body bends, then is suddenly drawn up to bend again; it seems as if they struggled body against body with their hearers, and regretted their inability to beat and pummel with their hands that mass of sins against which they so violently declaim. This is lamentable! Jesus, my dear brother, did Jesus speak in this way?

367. We see others who avoid this extravagant bawling and agitation, but whose delivery is so rapid that it is almost impossible to follow them! Sometimes their great precipitation causes an indistinct articulation of several words; they perceive it, and immediately repeat the same words with extreme rapidity, which is dreadfully fatiguing to their hearers; for it is mere stuttering.

But why this precipitation, which suggests the school-boy reciting his lesson with all the volubility of which his tongue is capable? How can any one persuade himself that a sermon thus delivered will affect the hearers, or help seeing that there is nothing so awful and imposing as the word of God, proclaimed in the very temple of God, under the eyes and only a few steps from Jesus, the true God, by the minister of God, for the salvation of a whole assembly of sinners redeemed by the Blood of their God. And how can they help saying to themselves that it is with a pious modesty, a holy gravity, and even with an imposing majesty, that the priest should ever proclaim to the people the lively oracles.

368. Others, nevertheless, throw themselves into the opposite excess. They are so slow as to chill and worry the best prepared of their hearers. Having contracted the habit of this excessive slowness, and persuading themselves that it is the best method, they follow it consistently. Each word is separated from that which precedes and follows by an appreciable interval. They commence a sentence; with the first words every one comprehends the whole; they outstrip the speaker by finishing this interminable sentence for themselves at a stroke; but all in vain; not one single word is spared. It is clear that such a delivery having neither action, nor warmth, nor energy, can only fatigue the congregation.

369. Some preachers are bold, and as it were impudent. Unconsciously they have almost an air of effrontery. They have scarcely opened their mouth than they stare at their hearers, generally and individually, with a coolness and assurance, which seems to say: "I am not afraid of you." In fact, they have a bold front, a steady eye, a self-sufficient expression, and a bearing so far from humble and composed, that the most indulgent hearers are painfully affected by it. Is such, we ask, the dignity of the holy priest, the pious attitude of the Apostle?

370. Others fall into the other extreme through excessive timidity. Poor little lambs! They stand in the pulpit as if they were in the dock at an assize court. Their face grows pale, their lips quiver, their limbs bend under them, and their knees knock repeatedly against the panels of the pulpit. Their delivery is necessarily affected by such a general nervousness; and the result is that it is feeble, slow, painfully broken, and assuredly incapable of producing the slightest effect on the congregation.

Courage, young brother (for they are nearly always the young priests who are subject to this timidity)—Courage; we have seen some, yes, many, more timid than you, who have become excellent preachers. Pray to God, pray heartily that He will strengthen you, and replace the puny ideas of fear by the sublime sentiments of faith.

371. There are some who, not knowing what they are, absolutely wish to pass as full of unction, although there is not a particle of unction in their manner of speaking.

Nothing is colder, as regards eloquence, than a factitious fervor. To expect to affect, to move a congregation, when the preacher himself is entirely untouched and unmoved, is a complete delusion. In vain you raise your eyes and arms towards heaven, you appeal to the Divine mercy, you throw into your words I know not how much of sweetness and persuasiveness, all your hearers, even the most ignorant, see, or rather feel, from the first, that your heart is not in harmony with your words and gestures; and when they find that this harmony does not exist, they are all the colder in proportion to the efforts you make to warm them.

These preachers are very great in their prayers addressed to God, to Jésus, or to Mary; these pious apostrophes, springing from a holy emotion, are often very effective; but when such prayers are not from the heart,

or when uttered in an unreal and unimpressive voice, the hearts of the hearers close instead of opening, and it is the preacher alone who fails to perceive the general insensibility.

372. Perhaps it would not be out of place here, to say a few words about certain preachers, whom a malicious world styles elegant? We have sometimes suffered, we have often felt an utter humiliation of soul, in hearing worldly persons exercise their malicious tongues at the expense of certain priests, who lay themselves open on this point, though we are willing to believe, most unconsciously. Our satirical critics remarked upon the elegance and affectation of these preachers, with such a caustic wit and such a piquant raillery, as to afford diversion to their numerous friends, and to induce many of their listeners to adopt the same ideas.

It must be confessed that some ecclesiastics, without the least consciousness of it, seem by their exterior to parade this elegance, for which the world itself reproaches them. Their dress, their hair, their looks, their attitude, their actions, everything in a word, breathes a certain refinement and fastidiousness, to which the people will always prefer the pious simplicity of the holy priest, or even a somewhat careless, yet apostolic negligence.

Further, we might add, that the pronunciation of these preachers not unfrequently smacks of the misplaced elegance against which we here contend. The words, instead of coming out of their mouths naturally and unaffectedly, seem to glide, gently restrained and softened, between compressed lips, and thus a feeble, effeminate, mawkish effect is given to the delivery, throwing an insuperable obstacle to any great effect from the Divine word.

Not thus preached Jesus, our Chief and our Model. Not thus preached the Chrysostoms, the Xaviers, the Dominic, the Vincent Ferrers, and the many others,

who touched the people as much by the pious modesty of their exterior, as by their most energetic sermons.

373. Let us say a last word about those preachers who are dull, and devoid of energy. It is not from timidity they are so, or we should have ranged them amongst the timid. No; timidity is not their fault; but they are by nature devoid of nerve and energy. Nothing rouses them, or, at least, nothing brings their emotion into play. The most terrible and the most comforting truths are uttered much in the same tone. They cannot drive their words before them with a masculine vigor; no, the tongue forms them softly, and leads them deliberately to the lips upon which they expire.

The most we can say is, that in the more vigorous passages, their words have life as they pass the lips; yet it is only to fall and expire at the foot of the pulpit. We repeat it, these preachers do not know how to drive out their words; they do not comprehend the use of sharp and energetic articulation, which is a great misfortune; for no one can imagine the happy effects which this articulation, when it is really good, produces upon the congregation.

Action! action! good delivery, in this is comprehended the sum of preaching, in all that relates to its externals. One page of Rodriguez, well delivered, will produce more effect than the finest sermon of Bourdaloue or Massillon read feebly and without energy. To how many preachers does all this apply! May they profit by our observations and warnings.

In support of the preceding reflections, we will relate a fact, for which we can vouch perfectly, inasmuch as we were eye-witnesses.

It was in 1821. A society called "*Les bonnes études*" was formed in Paris, for the purpose of uniting the students of law and medicine, who, devoting themselves in earnest to the instructions which they sought in the schools, consecrated to serious work the time which

many of their fellow-students wasted in the cafés and in scenes of debauchery. The celebrated M. Berryer was proposed as head of the section of law. Once a week he assembled them at the Sorbonne to give them theoretical and practical lessons on the eloquence of the bar.

At the commencement of this interesting course, he announced that, in the practical part, his first lesson would be in reading. Seeing amongst his hearers a movement of surprise, and even smiles, he said:

"I quite expected, gentlemen, that I should surprise you, and even raise a smile, by telling you that I should give you lessons in reading. Nevertheless, I shall not retreat; for although I have not the honor of knowing you, I am convinced that there are very few among you who know how to read well.

"And first of all, gentlemen, you must understand that I am not speaking of mere technical reading, *recto tono*; no; but of oratorical reading, the passage prepared beforehand, which we have to render interesting and attractive by the manner in which we treat it.

"I will select a passage, and name three amongst you to read the passage selected at our next meeting. I have chosen an extract from one of the pleadings of Linguet, which may be found in such a volume of his works. I have selected this passage because I look upon it as a chef-d'œuvre of graceful and refined skill. If it is well read, you will lay hold of a multitude of points which will enchant you; if it is badly read, you will lay hold of nothing; on the contrary, ennui will lay hold of you. Pray attend, gentlemen, for all that I tell you I believe to be exact."

Three pupils were then chosen at random from the list; eight days elapse; the assembly is at its fullest. We were forewarned; we were certain that the passage to be read was beautiful, very beautiful, marvellously beautiful; we could venture to say that the reading, however badly given, would not prevent us from attend-

ing to the substance, or from recognizing the beauties which had been pointed out to us. But no, we were mistaken; a bad delivery is a distraction so engrossing, so annoying, and repulsive, that it shrouds every beauty, instead of bringing it to light. Our three scholars came successively to give us the proof of this. Their readings seemed to us infinitely long; we need say no more than that they were "badly delivered."

M. Berryer, after having shown the defects in our fellow-students' manner of reading, took the book, saying, "Can I be deceived, gentlemen? Can the beauty I believed to exist in those lines be a mere imagination? Let us see."

Then began a reading of which it is impossible to give here the faintest idea. We do not believe that the sublime reader concluded a single sentence without provoking loud expressions of delight, and enthusiastic admiration. Every word expressed what it was meant to express; occasionally the suspense of a moment announced some exquisite feature, which, brought to its full beauty, carried every one away. The hand that was at liberty (the book was in the other) seemed to carry the words into the souls of the hearers, there to be engraved and sunk by a vivid and penetrating glance. Never had we felt so deeply the full charm and power contained in a good delivery.

374. Our last advice to preachers is this; that they should after the sermon pray to God with all their heart that He would multiply its fruits, and turn them solely to His greater glory, and the sanctification of souls.

Let us recommend them also to abstain from speaking of their sermon with the secret intention of obtaining a few worthless praises; a miserable vanity, utterly unworthy of the minister of Jesus Christ. If a preacher can truly say that he is not seeking a vain eulogium, in speaking of his work; if he really chooses to speak of it

to any learned ecclesiastic who may have heard him, merely to ask the kind assistance of his advice, assuredly nothing is better. How many faults we commit in composition and delivery which everybody notices, and which we are the last to observe! Let us, then, beg some one in charity to point them out to us, and try, by the aid of their warnings, to work in ourselves a reform which will, perhaps, enrich our Divine ministry with an additional fertility.

375. We must watch ourselves severely after preaching, lest we destroy in private the edifying truths that we have just uttered in public. We have often been painfully affected to see preachers who, after having drawn sobs and floods of tears from their hearers, to see them, we repeat, almost the very minute after leaving the pulpit, light in their behavior, jesting, flippant, laughing, and this at a festivity where many of those were present who had been so acutely affected at church. It is a want of tact and judgment, which, unhappily, would lead them to the belief that the preacher who acted thus could not be profoundly penetrated with the holy truths he had so noisily declared, and that, as far as he was concerned, it was all an affair of declamation, and nothing more. Let us watch, watch diligently over ourselves, and endeavor to make our actions even more eloquent than our words.

ADVICE TO CONFESSORS.

376. The work of works in the priest's ministry is confession. To this immeasurably important point all his acts should tend. If confession is not the end of all the efforts of his zeal, if it is not to this final result that all his steps lead, he dare not cry victory; it will not be won until he sees the sinner at his feet, soliciting by his tears the pardon which shall give peace to his agitated soul.

In the pulpit we speak to the multitude, and often

throughout the whole sermon we do not say a single word which especially meets the needs of this or that individual. But does he come to seek us at the holy tribunal? The scene is changed; here not a word is spoken but it specially applies to him.

In the pulpit we refer generally to the wounds of the soul, and we throw upon them at most, and from afar, a vague and superficial glance; at the holy tribunal the wounds are under our eye; we probe their depth; we discover the poison, and the infallible remedy is in our hands.

In the pulpit we merely point out, through our eloquence, hell and its punishments, heaven and its eternal joys; at the holy tribunal we do far better; in exchange for a confession and a tear we shut hell and open heaven.

Let us rekindle our faith and our zeal again and again with these serious considerations, ever more and more convinced of the extreme importance of our ministry at the tribunal of penance.

377. We should have, on this extensive matter, so many recommendations, and so much advice to give, that we feel in the highest degree embarrassed in selection; we intreat our dear brethren not to content themselves with the little we say, but to read over and over again such excellent treatises on the conduct of confessors, as are no doubt in their possession. We only request them to attach particular importance to the advice that we take the liberty of giving them.

378. First, we recommend you, according to the whole spirit of this book, to employ all the industry of your zeal to attract, nay, to drive sinners to the confessional. War, eternal war, against sin; and, as it is only at the confessional that sin finds its death blow, never lay down your arms before you see the sinner there, kneeling and repentant.

Do you pray? Then ask God to convert sinners, and to bring them to confession. Do you work? Let it be

in the object, directly or indirectly, of the conversion of sinners. Do you walk through your parish? Let it be in the search after sinners, and in meeting them at the holy tribunal. Do you preach? Whatever be your subject, treat it in such a manner as always to speak of conversion, and to show your hearers the way to the confessional. Is it not thither that every sermon ought to bring the sinners who hear it?

379. Allow us, dear brother, to ask you one question. Do you feel a taste for the ministry of confession? Viewing the immense advantages that this divine ministry procures for souls, do you feel at the bottom of your heart an ardent desire to consecrate yourself to it? And have you the witness in yourself that it is this one sole motive, the glory of God and the salvation of sinners, which inspires you with the love of ministering at the holy tribunal? Bless God, dear brethren, bless Him in the sweetest outpourings of your soul, if you can answer these questions in the affirmative. Ah, you know not the thousands of sinners that you are perhaps called to reconcile to God!

But if you have not this inclination, if you feel, on the contrary, a distaste for it, then I pity you, I pity you indeed. You would have done well to speak of it to the director of your conscience and to your superiors, when you were inquiring into your vocation at the seminary. Whatever it be, ascertain the origin of this distaste.

Does it arise from scruples of conscience? From the intense fear of assuming a responsibility, terrible no doubt, but beside which must be placed the infinite mercy of Jesus, who, in intrusting us with so heavy a ministry, well knows our misery and our weakness? Shake off your scruples and reckon upon the goodness of God, who will never condemn you on account of a ministry which you will have exercised only with the view of winning souls to Him.

But, alas! does not your distaste proceed rather from

a general remissness in your conduct? Holy priests, fervent missionaries, truly apostolical men, spend with delight whole days and nights in the confessional; but is it thus with a trifling, dissipated, worldly priest, a lover of play and good cheer? Ah! how few attractions can the confessional present to a priest of this character! How annoyed he is to hear that some one is waiting for him! With what promptness does he hurry off the penitents who delay his walk, his frivolous book, or his seat at the card-table. Let us draw a veil over these sad scandals.

In all this, dear brother, you must examine yourself before God, in order to find out the source of your distaste for a function so holy and so useful. Perhaps, after all, this distaste is only one out of many trials that God sends you, in order that you may have one merit the more in exercising this divine ministry. Ask in your prayers, and ask often, for a love for this august function.

380. We advise the young priests who are soon going to take their place at the holy tribunal, to make a novena of spiritual exercises to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to the most holy heart of Mary, with the intention of obtaining the grace necessary for the holy and effectual discharge of the duties which, as confessors, they are about to undertake. To offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with the same intention, once or even more often during this novena, would be most desirable.

381. A confessor, especially at the commencement of his career, and generally throughout his whole life, should incessantly read and read again his moral theology, and particularly the most practical treatises, Penitence, the Decalogue, Justice, Contracts, etc. He should also frequently read some standard works on the manner of exercising the ministry of confession to the best advantage. Lastly, he should have a perfect knowledge of the statutes of his diocese, as reserved cases and jurisdiction.

As to the principles to be adopted for his guidance in the theological decisions which may be required at any instant at the holy tribunal, he should, without adopting any exclusive standard, draw these principles from known and generally esteemed authors, such as, in public estimation, bear a character neither for laxity nor for severity.

382. We have mentioned before, that an earnest love for the ministry of confession is a most advantageous gift. Still, this is not enough; we must also convince our people that we have this love, and that we have it to such an extent that the hours we pass at the holy tribunal, however fatiguing to the body, are those which procure the sweetest consolations for our soul.

Let us try to establish this precious reputation in our immediate neighborhood. If we possess it, sinners will come to seek us, not only without fear of being considered importunate, but even with the certainty of giving us the most lively satisfaction. If, on the contrary, we are known to dislike this holy ministry; if it be seen that we go to the confessional with repugnance, and only because necessity constrains us, sinners will not come to seek us without apprehension, and many, already too little disposed to take a step which costs them much, will end by postponing it to an indefinite period; a deplorable evil, the responsibility of which must rest upon us.

Let us say, then, always and everywhere, *publicè et per domos*, that we are at the call of sinners; that nothing pleases us more than to see our confessional thronged; that we should be deeply grieved at their fearing to fatigue and weary us by their requests that we would hear them; and when they really do come, we must receive them with joy; hear them that moment, if nothing prevents; or, if some legitimate reason calls us elsewhere, with many expressions of our regret appoint an hour when we can hear them. In such circumstances, care-

fully avoid all quickness, all appearance of temper or annoyance.

383. Nevertheless, have regular hours for the confessional. It is a want of order to confess sometimes at one hour and sometimes at another; the penitents, not knowing when to find their confessor, and afraid of a fruitless journey, often end by staying at home altogether.

As to the hour, the confessor ought not always to choose that most agreeable to himself; he ought rather to be at the disposition of the public, than the public at his. How many workmen, how many servants can come to seek him only at a certain hour, which it is not in their power to alter! If at any time urgent business or other ministerial functions prevent our going to confess at the usual hour, we should endeavor to inform our penitents, who otherwise might fruitlessly waste their time in waiting for us.

384. Although we may have regular and well-known hours for confessing, this is no reason for unconditionally turning back any who may call us to the holy tribunal at another time. There is no rule without an exception; the men in general merit this exception; a sinner of either sex merits it the more if he have been for some long time estranged from the sacraments, and all at once desires to make a confession; the old and infirm; pregnant women, persons about to start on a journey, with many others, who clearly form exceptional cases, have a claim upon us for the infringement of our ordinary rule.

385. It is more important than we think that we go to the confessional free of all preoccupation. If our conscience be embarrassed, if we have begun a work on which we bestow an immoderate zeal, if we have planned a visit to a friend, or a pleasant excursion; in short, if anything occupies us, embarrasses us, or makes us wish that our stay in the confessional should not be long, this wrong feeling will tell upon every confession; we shall

put fewer questions, hurry on the declaration of sins, abridge our exhortation, and speak coldly, unsympathizingly, and impatiently; and if we see new penitents around the confessional, all the evils we have just mentioned will be further aggravated, and serious inconveniences of more than one kind may result. We must bear this in mind.

386. When a priest is on his way to the confessional he should never forget to stop at the foot of the altar, to offer there a preparatory prayer in profound recollection. Many dispense with this useful prayer, or offer it with an air so absent and preoccupied, that it is evidently only an act of routine and vain ceremonial on their part. The penitents will surely be edified at seeing their confessor lovingly conversing with Jesus before coming to hear them.

387. Perfect modesty is necessary as we enter the holy tribunal; no haste in our step, which might seem to suggest a desire to get on quickly with our work. Avoid looking at the penitents, especially the females, kneeling about the confessional; show no preference or respect for persons, much less for the rich, or for young women. As to men, that is another affair; if among several women we see any men in the farthest ranks, we may say to them without fear, "My friends, come up higher." We decidedly approve the conduct of many confessors, who give notice publicly that such a side of their confessional will be always at the convenience of the men, whatever the time they may come to confess.

388. We must not bind our penitents to our own tribunal, but, on the contrary, give them full and entire liberty to make their confession to any of our brethren as often as they desire. There are many, no doubt, who abuse this liberty by running from confessor to confessor. So much the worse for them; but so much and a thousand times worse for us and for them if we retain them by force at our tribunal, and if thereby we become

the cause of the numerous sacrileges which timidity induces them to commit.

We know no blindness more lamentable than that of a confessor, who, persuading himself, as so often happens, that his penitents cannot be afraid to confess all their sins to him, positively forbids them to address themselves to others, takes no pains to conceal the grief he would feel at their doing so, and, on learning that they have made a confession or two to a brother priest, receives them in the coldest manner, and sometimes with bitter reproaches.

We here positively declare, and we beg our readers to believe that we weigh our expressions carefully in their theological force; if a confessor, warned of this fault and of the serious consequences which may ensue, should still refuse to correct it, and continue by one way or other to show that his penitents cause him pain by quitting him, even once or twice only, thus holding his penitents in a sort of slavery, we would refuse him absolution.

Yes, and most certainly he would himself refuse it to another in the same circumstances if he had seen, what so many missionaries see every day, a multitude of souls in a state of sacrilege, because they dare not disclose some grievous sins to their ordinary confessors. Poor souls! with what eagerness they take advantage of a Mission to set their conscience at rest, and to recover once more that peace to which they have so long been strangers!

You who read these lines, Priest of Jesus Christ, whoever you may be, listen: if your penitents are numerous, especially if many of them appertain to that class vulgarly called *devout*, you may be very certain that some among the number are in a state of sacrilege, more especially if they know you object to their addressing themselves to other confessors, and if your manner of confessing is the least severe.

We wish to confirm what we have just said by the imposing authority of St. Liguori. He says: "If Missions had no other advantage than remedying the many sacrilegious confessions, sacrilegious because many sinners, among the women especially, from a false shame, are accustomed to conceal a part of their sins, this would be enough to render them desirable. This evil of imperfect confessions is rife throughout scattered parishes; partly because there are few confessors, partly because the penitents, seeing them every day as relatives or as friends, are ashamed to inform them of certain sins; so that the sinner, after having committed the sin, dares not confess it, and remains in a state of sacrilege all his life. There are some who, even on their deathbeds, dare not break this silence. Now one of the most essential advantages of a Mission is to repair all imperfect confessions; for the sinners, knowing that the missionaries are entire strangers, and that they will go away in a few days without any further meeting; struck too, as they are, by their sermons, do not hesitate to go and purge themselves by penitence from all the sins they had so long kept concealed."

Learn from hence to leave penitents at full liberty on this point; tell them so again and again in every possible way; go even further, and press those who come frequently to confession to confess to some other priest from time to time, or at least once a year. Great advantages must always result from this course, even if they should not use this liberty, but disregard our entreaties; for it will convince every one not only that they will cause us no pain by confessing to other priests, but that in doing so they will only anticipate our wishes. This will suffice to set their souls at ease. We do not at all regret the length of this article, so convinced are we of its high importance.

389. When a new penitent presents himself, do not receive him precisely as those who have long ago been

under your direction. He has, perhaps, hesitated much before presenting himself at your tribunal; perhaps he is very timid, and his timidity causes him to apprehend a cold and disheartening reception.

As soon as you see that it is a new penitent coming to you for the first time, do not let him declare a single sin before you have put him at ease by a few kind and fatherly words. Immediately after the *Confiteor*, tell him not to be afraid, but to think of himself as speaking to a father. "Without doubt," you may add, "you are like all the penitents who address themselves to a confessor for the first time, you are, probably, a little timid and embarrassed, not knowing how you will be received; but rest happy; reassure yourself; I will help you to make a good confession, and I am sure that by God's help I shall set your soul perfectly at peace." By this mild and encouraging language you gain a most important point, and enable the penitent to confess without timidity or embarrassment.

It is well, also, after this introduction, and before the confession of any sin, to say to the new penitent, that if he has any difficulty of conscience respecting his past confessions, he will do well to declare it immediately. "Believe me," we may say, "if in your past life there is anything which disquiets you, however little, tell me fearlessly; I will aid you in putting your conscience in order; I am here only for that purpose. Well now, have you anything which troubles you in the past; let us see?" We believe that this method is a very wise one, and that, well applied, it cannot produce other than happy results.

390. There are some confessors, beginners especially, who require general confessions from all. This is an abuse; but there are some, too, and these are not the youngest, who are unwilling to receive them from anybody. This is equally an abuse. It is certain that a general confession is often necessary, or, at least, very useful.

As a general rule, we think that when a penitent positively expresses a desire to make a general confession, he should be allowed to do so; at least, if he is not scrupulous, and does not play at making general confessions without apparent reason. If there is no perceptible danger in the confession which he demands, he should be allowed to make it.

Not unfrequently a middle course is adopted; the confessor, to shorten his labor, prefers asking such questions as he thinks fit on the general tenor of the penitent's past life; or, starting from a certain date, he takes a review of the succeeding years; all this is a patchwork which fully satisfies neither penitent nor confessor. It occupies almost as much time as a full confession; and then, as they fancy themselves at the end, this review, imperfect as it is, makes revelations which often render the general and regular confession necessary. We recommend, therefore, that the advice offered in this article should be followed in practice.

391. We especially caution confessors against too great an indulgence in dealing with offenders against the laws of the Church. If there be one thing more deplorable than another in these days, it is to see those sacred laws treated as if they had no existence, or as if they were in some sort merely matters of counsel. We do not mean that they are binding *sub notabili incommodo*, as all the world knows; but how many slip off the yoke without the shadow of an excuse which would avail before God! How many confessors, contenting themselves with these motives, close their eyes to infringements which they might frequently prevent!

It is often possible, with kindness in our outward behavior, and firmness in principle, to obtain much that other confessors are afraid to exact from their penitents. If the attempt were made to carry out these recommendations, without doubt it would not always be found unsuccessful.

392. There are many penitents whose consciences are always in the dark. They are very scrupulous about certain light faults, and, without misgiving, permit themselves a multitude of sins far more serious. Confessors, it must be acknowledged, sometimes keep penitents in this deplorable ignorance; they only skim lightly over the conscience, instead of probing it; they take all that is told without asking a word of explanation; they never instruct, never throw light upon a single point. Hence, plainly enough, the blindness of sinners, and the evil state of their consciences.

How many, for instance, among many sins of no very serious character, will say, without appearing to attach more importance to this than to the rest, that they have two or three times spoken ill of another. This declaration comes in between distractions at prayer and brief impatiences; a confessor who is inexact and content with the ordinary routine, receives all these sins *in globo*, in the lump, bids them at once finish the *Confiteor*, says his two or three words of exhortation, imposes the penance, and gives absolution.

Now suppose this same penitent by chance addresses himself to an exact confessor, with the same confession. Knowing by experience that sins against charity are not unfrequently mortal sins, he is not satisfied with the simple declaration, "I have spoken badly of my neighbor two or three times." He wishes to know if the evil-speaking has been serious, and often finds that it has really been so, and moreover that the penitent has been guilty, not of evil-speaking, but of falsehood and slander. Pushing his investigations a little deeper, he discovers that it is a habit, and a habit of long standing. If he then endeavors to represent the enormity of these faults in their true light, the sinner can hardly believe him, and will sullenly reply that they cannot be so serious as they are represented, since his ordinary confessor never seemed to attach much importance to them.

To undeceive and to enlighten such penitents it is often necessary to put them through a review of their past life, directing their attention especially to the faults now under consideration, and telling them, for their better satisfaction, that it is precisely and solely on account of these faults that we require this review. By directing their attention to this particular point the frequent repetition of the sin is prevented, and the existing habit destroyed.

393. The greatest gentleness is to be used towards all our penitents. We say *all*, for it is never denied to some who are as the spoiled children of the family; but how many others receive only harshness, coldness, and occasionally severe reprimands, uttered in such elevated tones that the penitents near the confessional are obliged to withdraw in order to avoid hearing the confessor's scolding. Who would say at the din of this tempest, that the author of it held the place of Jesus at a tribunal of peace and mercy? Oh, how soon has that austere judge forgotten that the poor prodigal kneeling at his feet has saluted him by the sweet name of father, and has said to him, with bended head, "Father, give me your blessing, for I have sinned."

Beware, I repeat, beware lest we scandalize our penitents by our rough manner, or close their lips when they must be opened to declare the grievous sins pressing so heavily on their conscience. If our temper is naturally quick and hasty, we must keep double watch over ourselves at the holy tribunal, and never enter it without having urgently asked of Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, to give us of His patience and gentleness.

394. We have said that this severity did not fall to the lot of all the sheep of the flock, and that there were some privileged ones upon whom the pastor showered his favors and predilections. On this point we cannot watch ourselves too closely. The earnest and energetic expressions which are so naturally pressed into the ser-

vice of a too expansive zeal are better avoided. Especially if this language is addressed to a person of the opposite sex, if she is young, if we feel a certain warmth in our labors for the salvation of her soul, a warmth far exceeding that which we feel towards others, we must distrust this impetuosity of zeal; we must spread cold ashes over this fire, which will be none the less pure for being covered, and abstain from all those expressive demonstrations of devotion and interest, which are of no great service here, which possibly may be dangerous, and which we had better keep for that beggar in rags, for that modest mechanic, for that ignorant peasant, or, better still, for that poor prodigal with whom we took such a high tone, and whom we overwhelmed with the weight of our reproaches.

This watch must be kept not only over our words, but over our looks. Whilst hearing certain persons, have eyes, but see not. We have often advised our young pupils in the seminary to hold habitually a small crucifix in their hand whilst hearing confessions. We may kiss it in moments of fatigue, weariness, or temptation, if temptation dare approach the holy place we occupy. We may kiss it whilst hearing the confession of particular persons, keeping our eyes fixed on the adorable Wounds of the Divine Jesus to the end of the confession. Oh, when we have kept watch over ourselves with this vigilance and chaste reserve, how calm and happy we are as we leave the confessional.

395. Never prolong, without the strongest reason, the confessions of women, especially if they are young. It would be exceedingly mischievous if people were to remark that we gave more time to young women than to other penitents. Malice will never fail to take advantage of this opportunity, and it will always be more or less at the expense of that good reputation which every confessor should do his utmost to preserve unstained.

Unfortunately it sometimes happens that a young

female penitent is scrupulous, and her confessions are consequently longer than the average. Now if this scrupulousness of hers were generally known, no great harm would follow. Those who waited would become weary, and that is all. But if she is not known as a scrupulous person, the case is different. Here we should advise you to abridge the confession as much as possible, of course without any unkindness, and even sometimes to break off and defer the remainder to another day. It would be allowable, under certain circumstances, to assign to these persons a particular time, or compel them to wait until all the others have had their turn.

Above all, if there are any men waiting among the penitents, we are bound to resort to one or other of the means before indicated to get rid of these scrupulous girls, who are often the cause that the men leave the church, and are tempted not to return. Nor must we permit these young persons to come too frequently to confess, that is, several times a week; other penitents making their confessions less frequently, the world will not fail to remark the difference, and to make it a subject of jest, or even of biting satire.

In such circumstances, we must not obstinately attempt to stem the torrent, or venture to despise the slander which attacks us; this is unhappily the blindness of many injudicious priests, who, convinced of their own good intentions, and of the excellent advice they give their penitents in these frequent confessions, will not perceive how much more important it is to maintain their own reputation unsullied, than to receive these young women so often at confession.

396. It would be indeed a very false interpretation of our thoughts if any one were to conclude from the preceding section that it is unnecessary to urge our penitents, as a general rule, to frequent attendance at the Sacraments. We cannot too earnestly exhort confessors to augment more and more the flock of faithful souls

who come to confession weekly. These souls, if well directed, will procure for holy priests the sweetest consolations. When we have given them a just idea of true and solid devotion; when we have taught them noble sentiments of practical humility, charity, gentleness, and self-denial, there is no joy more pure than that which we experience in seeing them, each week, walking with new fervor in the footprints of Jesus, and eagerly seizing every means offered to attain an even higher perfection.

We think a zealous confessor might easily procure for many souls the advantage of a weekly participation of the Sacraments. The penitents do not generally like to ask this privilege of themselves; they desire that a zealous confessor should decide this for them, and he would seriously fail in his duty if he neglected to make, at any rate, the attempt. He may begin by endeavoring to bring them to the Sacrament on all the principal feasts in the year; he may next exhort them to come regularly once a month; then every fortnight; and at last, every week. We are convinced that by discreet management, and by representing the great advantage of this frequent participation in the Sacraments, he will induce many to adopt this habit, from which, under the direction of a priest without zeal, they would have held aloof.

Young men, especially, are generally incapable of maintaining themselves any long time in a state of grace, unless they are dragged as it were by force and by all the ingenuity of untiring zeal to frequent, yes, and very frequent confession. Every priest, however little he may have exercised his ministry, must acknowledge that on this point our observations are perfectly accurate.

397. We will here direct the attention of Confessors to those female penitents, unhappily too numerous, who, by the mixture of external works of piety and real defects, have ended by attaching to the word *devotion* a sense which, from its nature, it should never have suggested to their minds.

For several years these persons have been in the habit of communicating so many times a week, and of making their little daily round of pious exercises. Not to miss a single communion, nor a single *Ave Maria*, is their essential, their *ne plus ultra*, in importance. But when it is a question of correcting their faults, or at least of attacking them vigorously, this is another affair; it is important if you like, but important in a second or third rank. Nay, they are sometimes so blind as not to declare these faults to their confessor, thus leaving him ignorant of what it is so important he should know.

We would especially call the attention of the Confessor to this fact. If he succeed in discovering this spiritual blindness (not always an easy matter), he must not neglect to enlighten these poor blind creatures, and show them clearly the injury which they inflict upon the devotion they profess. They should be made to withdraw for a time from the Sacraments which in time past they have but too often received; and the better to show them how much of serious fault there is in their habitual conduct, they should be persuaded to make a review of several years past, and afterwards to keep a strict watch over themselves, in order to ascertain whether these various means produce the desired effect.

398. May we hear women for direction out of the holy tribunal? If they are young, never; if they are advanced in age, rarely. This direction, we do not dispute, may be useful; but very often, for women, it is a loss of time and nothing less. Besides, such direction can be given at the confessional. Let it be a standing rule never to admit female penitents to our own house, nor to enter theirs. By observing this, we shall gain a great deal, and our penitents will not lose much.

We can never over-estimate how important it is to a priest never to give the slightest opportunity for scandal with respect to the habitual and frequent visits which he receives from women, or which he has the imprudence to

pay to them. How often and how seriously have we lamented the inexplicable blindness of certain priests, who, notwithstanding the urgent remonstrances of their friends, and even the warnings of their superiors, persist in receiving women at their houses, or visiting them at their own, without being the least uneasy at the malignant censure which the public passes on their conduct! In the case of bad priests who have thrown off the mask, alas! it may be easily conceived; but in the case of priests otherwise blameless, it cannot be explained except by wrongheadedness and faulty judgment. And yet what is more simple than the reflection: "It is not necessary that I should be often in that woman's company; and it is an absolute necessity that my reputation should be unsullied."

399. We shall close this advice by earnestly recommending confessors to pray often and fervently for the numerous family of penitents which God has given them. Ah? if there is one prayer more promptly answered than another, it is assuredly that of a confessor for his poor prodigals. Let him pray for them with all the fervor of his soul, and particularly for those who are surrounded by violent temptations and in serious danger of yielding. Let him often offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with the same intention, and impose upon himself, after the example of the saints, severe penances to avert the Divine justice.

CONCLUSION.

400. The task we have undertaken draws to its close. We engaged in it with a lively desire to procure the glory of God and the salvation of souls. We shall terminate it with ardent vows that the God of all mercy will crown our feeble efforts with success; for He alone can give to the works of man their increase and their fruit.

Dear and much-beloved Brethren, permit me, once more, and for the last time before laying down my pen, to conjure you in the name of Jesus Christ, whose ministers you are, and in the name of the many sinners for whom He shed His Blood, to throw yourself with a livelier ardor into the holy Way of Zeal in which your Divine Father would see you walk without fainting.

Jesus, dear Colleagues, Jesus has yielded His place to us. Whilst He lived on earth the people saw Him, as it were, multiplying Himself to instruct the ignorant, console the afflicted, and convert sinners. But on the eve of His sorrowful passion, on the eve of His death, He ended His labors; and, more than ever pitying sinners, He instituted the Priesthood to save them, that is, He appointed others to do in His place, and in His Name, all that He had done during His mortal life for the salvation of the world. Living shadows of Jesus Christ, Priest-saviours, honored by the ineffable power of perpetuating His Divine Ministry, let us answer His appeal, and merit more and more the high confidence with which He has honored us.

Let us save, let us save souls, since it is to us that their eternal salvation is confided. Let us snatch from the demon the precious sheep of Jesus; let us close under their feet the gulf of Hell, ever yawning to swallow them up. Let us open above their head that Heaven of beauty from which they have deserved to be forever banished, but which Divine Mercy still keeps open for them.

Let us declare pitiless war against those faults which tend more particularly to quench the ardor of our zeal. War then, war to the death against dissipation, which chills and hardens us in the service of God; against sensuality, which makes us all carnal; against avarice, which locks our heart and our money in the strong box; against pride, which leads us to usurp God's glory in a ministry where God is all, and man is so little; against lukewarmness, which gives us a distaste for the most

holy works; against idleness, which scandalizes our people, and is always the source of a thousand miseries.

Let us not stop here in our generous labors. After clearing the ground, let us sow and reap. After digging the foundation, let us erect the edifice. As faults disappear, let virtues spring forth to light. A lively faith, firm hope, burning love, a divinely impetuous zeal, profound humility, severe mortification, tender, amiable, and solid piety, unvaried gentleness, disinterestedness in every trial, and a winning and pious modesty, such are the virtues of which our hearts, as priests, ought to be the shrine and depository, and without which, we should most surely violate in a thousand encounters the rigorous duties of our holy station.

The day approaches, venerable brethren, the day of calamity and misery for the priests without zeal, *Dies calamitatis et miseriæ*, the day of anguish, when we shall fall at the feet of the Sovereign Judge, to render Him an account of the manner in which we have fulfilled the awful obligations imposed upon us. What a frightful doom, if when Jesus says: *Redde rationem villicationis tuæ*, we have only a heap of frivolous actions instead of those fruitful works which ought to form as it were the tissue of every sacerdotal life!

One day a holy priest, hearing that one of his young brethren had died immediately after having offered for the first time the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, exclaimed in accents of the most lively faith: "How happy to have to render account to God only of the celebration of a single Mass!"

Our account, dear brethren, will be widely different from that of the young priest. How many times have we immolated the Divine Victim! How many times have we taken our seat at the Holy tribunal! How many times have we ascended the pulpit of the Gospel! How many times have we passed a brother soul into the regions of eternity! And, in the midst of these sublime

functions, what a weight of responsibility has constantly rested upon our heads!

Well for us if we have appeased our Judge by the multitude of such works of zeal, so potent in disarming His Divine wrath! But, alas! How many blanks, perhaps, in our life of Priest! How much advice we might have given! What salutary remorse we might have inspired! What works we might have undertaken! How much we might have done for sinners! How many prayers we might have offered for their conversion! How many penances we might have offered to God for the salvation of our poor prodigals! In a word, how many souls we might have saved, which are perhaps in hell, or on the fatal descent which leads thither, because we slumbered in a slothful lukewarm life, where works of zeal occupied so small a place!

Wake up, dear brethren, *Hora est jam nos de somno surgere*; hasten to put an end to what may be for us a source of useless and eternal regret.

Adorable Heart of Jesus, always big with mercy, always on fire with love, deign to permit me to lay in Thy sacred depths the pious counsels which I have drawn from them, and which I have presumed to give to my much-loved brethren in this little work. Bless, O Lord, and sanctify these my counsels, and join to them, I beseech Thee, that secret unction and that all-Divine virtue which will assure their perfect execution.

I ask of Thee this favor, O Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, that good and tender Mother, to whom Thou canst refuse nothing, above all when it is for Thy ministers that she intercedes.

LAUDETUR JESUS CHRISTUS.

AMEN.

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